THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY

JAMES MOFFATT

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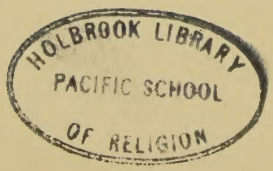
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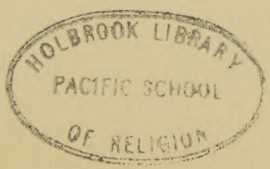
THE FONDREN LECTURES FOR 1929

THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY

BY

JAMES MOFFATT



The Fondren Lectures

MR. AND MRS W. W. FONDREN, members of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Houston, Tex., gave to Southern Methodist University on May 10, 1910, a fund, the proceeds from which were to be used in the establishment of the FONDREN LECTURES on Christian Missions. The following paragraph from the conditions of the original gift will set forth the spirit and purpose of the Foundation:

"The interest on the investment shall be used annually in procuring some competent person to deliver lectures on Christian Missions under the auspices of Southern Methodist University. This fund is dedicated to the foundation of a Lectureship on Christian Missions in consideration of other donations made for the upbuilding of Southern Methodist University, and especially the School of Theology thereof, and in the hope that something of good may come directly therefrom and that others more able to give largely may be inspired to devote some portion of their means which they hold in trust as stewards of the Lord to the increase of said fund or to some other laudable enterprise of our Church."

THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY

THE FONDREN LECTURES FOR 1929

DELIVERED BEFORE SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY DALLAS, TEX.

APRIL, 1929

BY

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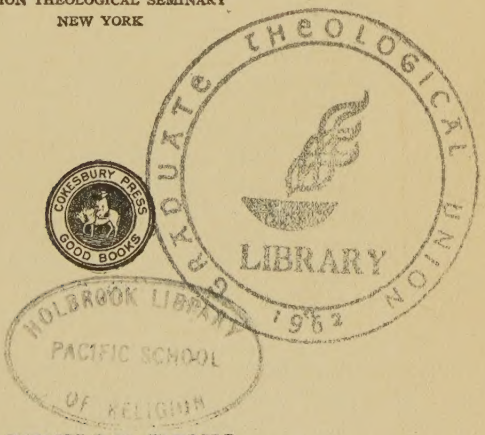
NEW YORK



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THE candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false, I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight:

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie—taught original sin,
The corruption of man's heart.
—*Browning:* "Dramatis Personæ" (1864).

LE réveil chrétien persiste et se développe énergiquement en face des ses adversaires. Le temps actuel a droit à plus de justice qu'on ne lui en accorde; son travail intellectuel est très-étendu et très-varie. . . .

Dans les temps d'incrédulité et d'indifférence religieuse, et même quand on commence à en sortir, c'est l'erreur de beaucoup d'hommes, même parmi ceux qui respectent et soutiennent la religion, de la considérer comme une grande institution publique . . . qui doit à son utilité pratique plutôt qu'à sa vérité intrinsèque son mérite et son droit. Grave méprise. . . ! Les hommes ont besoin et soif de vérité dans leurs rapports avec Dieu encore plus que dans leurs rapports entre eux. . . C'est au nom de la vérité de la religion chrétienne, de sa vérité manifestée dans son histoire par la parole et la présence de Dieu même, que s'est accompli parmi nous le réveil chrétien.
—*Guizot:* "Méditations sur la Religion Chrétienne" (deuxième série, 1866), pp. 320, 141, 142.

THE prevailing attitude assumed of late years by what is called educated opinion toward the supernatural foundation and the practical authority of Christian faith has heightened the responsibilities

of Christians who are thankful to live in a time of free mental activity, and rejoice in many of its results to themselves and others. . . It is from the credulity of Christians that the Christian faith suffers most in days of debate.

—*Hort:* "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Hulsean Lectures, 1872), pp. xxix, xxxvi.

FOR much of the agnosticism of the age, the gnosticism of theologians is undeniably responsible. They have inconsiderately overstrained the language of religion till its meaning breaks; and the coherent thinker easily picks up its ruins to show that they can contain nothing.

—*Martineau:* "A Study of Religion" (1888), vol. i, p. xi.

As a rule, the most depressing and disheartening of all religious literature is the apologetic literature. If I wished to doubt the possibility of a revelation, I should take a course of reading in defense of it. The works of professional assailants are, often, indeed of exactly the same description; but I know no books so valuable to probe the sources and show the real depth and realities of the Christian revelation as the books of profound-minded, honest, reluctant skeptics, if only, instead of being scared by them, we would allow them to sink quietly into the mind, and be there fairly tested as "working hypotheses." . . . All delineations of real and eager mental conflict, of minds in honest transition, open out fresh realities to the mind; and if tranquilly laid to heart, for every new difficulty there is generally found more than one new spring of faith.

—*R. H. Hutton*: "Theological Essays" (third edition, revised, 1888), pp. 168, 189.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

By "The day before yesterday" I mean the period immediately preceding the generation in which most of us were born. If we take thirty or forty years as the normal equivalent for a generation, this calculation brings us to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, or rather to the period beginning with the sixties, the period marked by such important events as the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species" in 1859, by the economic and industrial rate of progress in Great Britain, and by political upheavals like the rise of Italy to freedom, the Civil War in America, the aggrandizement of Prussia, and the constitutional agitations in Scandinavia and Spain. By 1890 this period has begun to pass into what we call "yesterday."

Even historically it is as a rule wise to study the day before yesterday. In the natural impatience of a new generation the contributions of its immediate predecessor are apt to be depreciated, and much more those of the period farther back. The history of the day before yesterday—*l'histoire de l'avant-hier*—as Guizot remarked, is always least familiar. Of "yester-

day" men are not unready to be conscious, even though what they are conscious of may be no more than their own superiority to it. The average person would seldom say, with the prophet Elijah, "I am no better than my fathers." He is pretty sure that he is, and, for that reason alone, he does not mind an occasional recollection of his fathers. It ministers to his complacency. He recalls yesterday, in order to realize that to-day is so much brighter and better. But the day before yesterday is more easily ignored. Ordinary people do not understand it; indeed, they rarely think it worth understanding.

> "Lo, all that age is as a speck of sand
> Lost on the long beach when the tides are free,
> And no man metes it in his hollow hand,
> Nor cares to ponder it, how small it be;
> At ebb it lies forgotten on the land,
> And at full tide forgotten in the sea."

It is only a minority even among educated persons who take pains to look past yesterday to the doings of the day before. The large majority plead that they really have no time to waste on such a sight, when the quick tides of the present are calling and changing under their very eyes. The outcome of this attitude is a confident and superficial temper which

seldom realizes the importance of being able to distinguish between things that happen and things that matter, largely because such persons have not disciplined themselves to verify this principle of judgment by studying the history of the day before yesterday. They are so unfortunate as to dismiss the events of these years, in the belief that none is of more than antiquarian interest. And yet sometimes forces started in that period are telling with unconscious power upon the life of the present. It is a loss when the intense self-consciousness of the present produces a tendency to obscure what happened, say, half a century ago. In our preoccupation with the duties and opportunities which face us here and now, we are often all the better for realizing that these may go back to phases of thought and action which our predecessors experienced. Otherwise it is possible that we miss the requisite judgment for handling the immediate situation, since it is only by looking back to these earlier phases in the succession that we gain the proper focus for viewing its outcome to-day. Unless such a grasp of the day before yesterday is held, men are prone in the present to be thin and hasty in their advances or unduly

despondent in face of difficulties. They become more sensible of changes than of continuity. Sometimes it is of lasting value even to realize that problems have already been met; they may not have been satisfactorily solved, but the mere fact that they have been raised—that is, the knowledge of this fact—is enough to provide us with wholesome warnings and not unprofitable suggestions for our own day and duty.

It is particularly sound to take note of the day before yesterday, as it concerns ourselves, by gaining an outlook upon religion as that is reflected in literature. Just because their battles were not waged with exactly the same weapons as ours are, we are apt to forget that the leaders of that day were often meeting foes who face us in different guises. From certain books and writers of that period we have still something significant to learn. It is only the hybrid union of sentiment and science in Spengler which maintains that "the duration of a generation is a fact of almost mystical significance." This is far from being invariably true. But it happens to be true of the period between 1860 and 1895, from which we learn this, at any rate, that the Christian religion has

been under fire before now, that it has given way to panic as well as to overconfidence, that it has handicapped itself by adhering to outworn tactics and weapons, and that it has displayed recuperative powers which have been a surprise to its followers as well as to its opponents. There is much else to be learned from the day before yesterday; for example, we may understand afresh how good controversy is educative. But, details apart, we to-day are always the better for having our vision widened by standing back from the present. If we do not, we are on the way to join the "natural and nonchalant persons," whom Walt Whitman celebrates. What comes up to our eyes and ears may impose upon us by its very nearness, till we mistake its true proportions and exaggerate its significance; the remedy is to see it against the background of the preceding age, for by this discipline of the mind and imagination we acquire certain standards of judgment and are enabled to avoid the superficiality which besets any passion for being up-to-date. To labor this point would be to underline the obvious. Suffice it to say that in the day before yesterday it is often possible to detect movements

which have helped more or less directly to make us what we are and to place us where we are, in front of new problems and rich opportunities. We do well to bear such records in mind, therefore. *Haec omnia scripta sunt ad correptionem nostram . . . quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt.*

I

It is my purpose to survey some features of this day before yesterday in literature, with reference to faith and religion. At the outset I desire to define this purpose by making two remarks. One is, that my aim is limited and elementary. The history of thought in the nineteenth century has been repeatedly outlined, both as regards philosophy or science and in relation to religion and Church life. Here I presuppose these currents, and only note how literature reflects them as they poured along certain channels. Which involves a second caution—namely, the reader must realize that the verse and prose of this period as of any other have a larger value than any interpretation of their moral message can possibly yield. Literature in any age is only a partial reflection of contemporary life, and as it is literature it possesses artistic qualities which

are more or less independent of its ideas on any particular subject. Real literature opens up the meaning and satisfaction and interest of life; it furnishes us with standards and stimulus, which may be of Paradise or of the Pit; but its ethical significance is by no means everything. Furthermore, though it may sound an impious paradox to say so, some of the best gifts of God in literature are not religious at all. I mean, they are not about religion, and they are none the worse for that. Think only in fiction of writers like Maurus Jôkai, Björnson, Daudet, and Trollope, of Charles Kingsley and his brother Henry, of Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins, of R. L. Stevenson and Miss Thackeray, of W. D. Howells, Mark Twain, and Herman Melville, of G. W. Cable, or of the earlier Henry James who, as a modern French critic judges, would be regarded to-day as a classic if he had ceased to write about 1890, when he had produced masterpieces like "Roderick Hudson," "Daisy Miller," and "The Aspern Papers." In the prose fiction alone produced by the day before yesterday there were many such fine books, which added to joy and knowledge and innocent acquaintance with human life, but which

never come under review as we proceed with our chosen study of the period. Even with regard to the writings and writers who do engage our special interest, I disclaim any attempt to read into them a private or irrelevant meaning. An effort such as engages us may be regarded as a perversion of literature. Why turn books into a pulpit? it may be said. Why extract from them judgments on religion? Why measure them by some rod of faith? Why, indeed? But the central literature of the day before yesterday very soon reveals this fact, that religious questions played a large part in most of its departments, a part almost as large as that played to-day by the dreary theme of economics. Questions had been raised which affected religion, and, to a surprising extent, people were still profoundly interested in asking or in trying to answer such questions. Religion was becoming more and more identified either with any sort of serious answer to the mystery of existence or with any unselfish interest, such as art, science, or social welfare; in England, despite the timely revival of the idea of the Church by the Oxford movement, ecclesiastical aspects of Christianity were yielding, for instance, to the

historical and personal emphases of the faith. But, whatever was the special attraction, we do not require to ransack corners for evidence that religion was a dominant motif. Over and again, in the literary forms of current drama and fiction, in prose as well as in verse, we find religion being challenged, criticized, and expounded by some of the foremost writers of the day. Sometimes the most religious said least about their personal faith; that happens in books as well as in life. Many authors, some of them poets like D. G. Rossetti and Sully Prudhomme, sought inspiration elsewhere, in æsthetic or in ethical ideals. But others were moved to testify, to argue, and even to sing of what they did believe.

Suppose, then, we take 1860 as a convenient year for marking the rise of the day before yesterday. Suppose we fasten our minds like a curtain to that year as a peg, and date the next generation as lasting for about thirty or thirty-five years. It was the year after Wagner's "Tristan" was finished, after the "Origin of Species" had been published and the *Société d'Anthropologie* had been founded in Paris, the year before Maine's "Ancient Law" and Herbert Spencer's "First Principles"

were published, and the year in which "Essays and Reviews" disturbed the religious mind of England by presenting the new methods of science and history in their application to the Bible. In anthropology, science, and philosophy, England was rapidly overtaking France and Germany during this period. A time of upheaval was at hand, in thought no less than in politics; forces had been accumulating which were now to work in unexpected directions, and one of these directions was religious belief, where the new ideas of creation and the struggle for life, of continuity and progress, of historical proof and literary research into the origins of humanity and tradition, were to stir the pool with fresh impacts whose ripples are still being felt. It was the age of Michelet and Havet, of Renan and Taine in France, of Mommsen, Ranke, and von Sybel in Germany, of men like Dostoievsky and Tolstoy in Russia—to name only some of the outstanding names in the international list. By 1890 or 1895 the scene had begun to change; in the greater fiction Marcel Prévost, René Bazin, and Anatole France rise to inaugurate what we may call "yesterday," just as Kipling and Galsworthy succeed to George Meredith, whilst

the new drama is being launched by Barrie, Synge, Yeats, and Shaw. Practically thirty years cover the day before yesterday.

What one notices during the shifting currents of the period is in one aspect the surge of realism against romanticism, which is so marked a feature of French literature, and which in its own way explains the rise of the Christian Socialist vogue in English fiction such as Mrs. Gaskell and Charles Kingsley produced just before the dawn of our period. But as important is the reaction against the lower realism. This characterizes a critic like Brunetière and less positively, from a religious point of view, Bourget. The growth of moral as well as of mental confidence in religion, accompanied by a free spirit of inquiry, is evinced by the writings of Englishmen like T. H. Green and Martineau, as compared with the earlier F. D. Maurice. Otherwise, it is a period in which Hallam and Macaulay are succeeded in history by S. R. Gardiner and Froude, Dickens and Thackeray in fiction by Meredith and Hardy, De Quincey and Hazlitt in criticism by writers like Bagehot and Andrew Lang, Leigh Hunt by Pater and Symonds. It is more easy to feel than to

define the change indicated by such names. In æsthetic and literary technique there is a distinct predominance of the French spirit, indeed. But two things may be said. One is, that the pervading temper of the age spread from the scientific researches of Darwin, and the other is that it was England through Darwin which was more responsible than any other country, even than Germany, for the mental impetus which did so much to shake up an astonished world during the day before yesterday. The effect of the ferment on literature was less marked in America than in England or on the Continent. By 1865 men like Washington Irving, Poe, and Hawthorne had really done their work, and although Emerson and Longfellow were still to repeat their testimony in favor of the angels, though Professor Fiske of Harvard was to work his way through an evolutionary philosophy into theism, with a definite effect on contemporary thinking, still neither Longfellow nor a minor poet like Whittier wrestled with the problems of thought; they were singers and seers, pre-eminently. The one writer who reflected in his own fashion the seething questions of the day was Walt Whitman. His reaction against

a false asceticism and his passion for human comradeship had been voiced before 1860, indeed; but after the Civil War they became a sort of ardent, excited substitute for religion in his writings.

II

Compare now, for a moment, the literature of the day before yesterday with that of to-day. Without drawing any generalization, which would be untrue at three points out of five, and without yielding to any depreciation of the present at the expense of its predecessor, one is surely within the mark when one detects a decided change of emphasis. What are the chief interests to-day? In verse and prose, are they not the erotic and the economic? Is it unfair to detect a tendency to read life in terms either of the sexual motive or of the social urge? Novels and plays preach as much as ever they did, but it is not religion which is their text. Now, love and hunger are powerful forces; no literature can afford to neglect them, even although some of the best romances in the world give little or no place to love. Still, there are other interests. There is one other interest, above all, which is not to be ignored. What it is may be gathered

from a criticism passed by Joseph Conrad on an English book of travels, which had greatly pleased him; the writer, said Conrad, had "a grasp on real human affairs, I mean the great and pitiful affairs concerned with bread, love, and the obscure, unexpressed needs which drive crowds to prayer in the holy places of the earth." It is this third interest which, as it seems to me, is rather more prominent in the verse and prose of the day before yesterday than it is to-day. I do not forget Zola and the Goncourts in the day before yesterday. Even then a naturalistic current had begun to flow, which in English fiction may be marked by George Moore's tales of "A Modern Lover" (1883) and "A Mummer's Wife" (1884). But this has worked on with increasing audacity and popularity, particularly in novels. Under the plea of rejecting inhibitions and conventional restraints, which certainly were bound up with some false prudery, there are to-day far more novelists than there were between 1860 and 1890 who resemble lively and dirty cockroaches in the basement of the House of Life. The contemporary passion for realism, in sensational forms, has not indeed swept the higher interests out of our literature; no

one acquainted with modern developments in poetry or in the drama would allow that. Nevertheless, so far as fiction and even poetry are concerned, these nobler interests were upon the whole more fully and widely recognized then. It is of such interests that I propose to speak, of some aspects in which we may consider the religious issue as it is found to emerge in certain phases of verse and prose during the day before yesterday, when men from this side or that spoke about life and death and love and pain and God and sin and immortality.

On the whole philosophy has become less agnostic and materialistic than it was fifty years ago. Bergson's first vital essay *Sur les données immèdiates de la conscience* in 1888 is significant of a newer trend; there has been an abatement of the arrogant, crude antagonism to a spiritual or theistic view of things. But it must be acknowledged that general literature has grown less religious—I mean, not in handling or failing to handle religious subjects so much as in the matter of sympathy with religious ideals. Not that in the day before yesterday literature was a constant ally to the faith. On the contrary, it is plain, to begin

with, that a large part of the literature was adverse to Christianity—that is, to the Christianity of the churches. Many of the most popular writers were contemptuous or critical, when they happened to notice religion, and it is only just to say that they had some reason for their bad impressions of the faith. Swinburne and Samuel Butler, for example, were contemporaries of Tennyson and Browning, and Butler's pungent pages on contemporary Christianity ought to be specially reckoned with as one forms any estimate of the day before yesterday in England. Books like "Fairhaven," "Erewhon," and "The Way of All Flesh" (a novel written as far back as 1872-1884, though it was not published till 1903) are perhaps read more widely to-day, though some do not realize it, than "In Memoriam" or "A Death in the Desert"; their satirical exposure of religion or of nominal Christianity appealed, as it still appeals, to hundreds who are disillusioned by some unfortunate experience of the faith or mentally disposed to question certain dogmas. To others a glowing poem like Swinburne's "Hertha" still seems to express a better attitude toward Nature than any theistic

scheme. In the long run, the salient factors in this dissatisfaction began to be laid to heart by responsible people in the Church. As Brunschvicg puts it in one of his acute essays, "*Le remède à la maladie du scepticisme, c'est de guérir le dogmatisme dont elle est la conséquence.*" To this task of healing the antiquated dogmatism, sensible Christians gradually addressed themselves; they became less inclined to feign certainty or to be daunted by wholesale denunciations. A living religion will always profit by criticism, even though it be hostile and hasty, even though, as often happens, its true protest is put unfairly. Christianity ought never to turn a deaf ear to any serious criticism from outsiders, any more than it should in panic imagine that such outsiders have succeeded in taking away its Lord. In some circles it was guilty of both errors, however, the day before yesterday. When people said that they stumbled at certain dogmas and when others declared that they were disappointed with the moral results of the faith, its defenders were occasionally inclined to say, "That is your own fault," instead of looking inward and then restating religion acceptably. The result was a wide-

spread impression throughout Europe, felt by men like Mill as well as by Karl Marx, by von Hartmann no less than by Herbert Spencer, that traditional Christianity was outgrown, that intellectually and morally it was no more than an effete survival, if not positively harmful to progress, and that some new synthesis was required in order to meet the larger needs of mankind. One of the most significant expressions of this conviction was the attempt to forecast what we may call A Third Religion.

CHAPTER 1
A THIRD RELIGION

CHAPTER 1

A THIRD RELIGION

A MODERN editor of Blake observes that in Blake's ecstatic prose even the word "Christianity" appears to "glow with prismatic colors." So it ought to glow within the churches; the faith ought to have some radiance of vitality about it. But it is sad to notice how dull and poor a thing conventional Christianity in Europe seemed to many during the day before yesterday; it might be living, but it was not healthy, not healthy enough to show color in its cheeks or brightness in its eyes. So at least, many writers protested. Possibly they were not always very sympathetic. Had they possessed more patience, they might have had more insight. A writer like Nietzsche, indeed, who had no room on his table of values for Christianity at all, could not be expected to find any "native hue of resolution," any glow or goodness, in a system which was based on slave-morality, and which, by its morbid asceticism, debased human nature. His "Anti-Christian," with its bitter comments on Jesus and St. Paul, was not

written till 1888, but the ideas of the book had been implicit in his thinking for nearly twenty years, and such repudiation of Christianity as a weak cult of suffering and equality put him out of sight of what the religion really meant, though we admit freely that his bracing ethic held a truth which some tepid forms of contemporary Christianity would have done well to assimilate. Nevertheless there were less drastic writers who missed the fundamental pulse of Christianity. *Magna opera Domini*, as the psalmist sang. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Often there is more Christianity than some contemporary cavillers in literature either realize or are willing to admit. What they do not seek out, they fail to credit. They may be put off by some unfortunate experience or by certain poor products of the religion in their neighborhood, and thus their judgment may be after all a judgment on themselves rather than on the Christianity which they have not taken the trouble to verify at first hand. At the same time one must allow that the Christianity presented by the churches was not a very "great work" of the Lord—the Christianity that Mazzini

saw displayed by the Roman church in Italy, for example, or that Samuel Butler encountered in the Anglican communion, or that Amiel found in Switzerland. No soul alive with reality could take pleasure in such exhibitions of the Christian religion. It would be slap-dash criticism to say that these were typical; still, one has not to read very far in the literature of the sixties and the seventies to discover how many straightforward people were repelled from Christianity by its failure to appeal to the intelligence, the imagination, or the conscience. It appeared to lack vitality and nerve, it seemed conventional and timid when it ought to have been adventurous, and when it did shake off tradition it too often became turbulent and provincial. Small wonder that a disconcerting number of men and women were too religious to be satisfied with any such synthesis as the churches formally offered. Some of the foremost spirits were not content to pass it by, indeed, but, believing that men required some religion, they set themselves to devise a better, or at any rate to dream of a substitute. Fancy religions look odd after time has dealt with them. "Photography is apt to be cruel on women

out of their teens," Mrs. Carlyle wrote ruefully to a friend. So with religious fantasies or economic utopias; they come out badly in the light of history, after forty years or even less. Mongrel religions like those invented in "Tancred" or "Robert Elsmere" now look like sad curiosities. But some were sincerely intended in the day before yesterday. There were one or two speculative constructions ably as well as honestly designed to fill the void which the supposed failure of Christianity had left within the modern world. For them it may at least be said that their authors were practical; instead of being captious critics they were prepared to suggest an alternative for what they felt themselves obliged to discard.

One of these constructive rebels was Henrik Ibsen, the great Scandinavian dramatist of last century, born like Tolstoy and George Meredith in 1828, and destined like them to do some of his best work about 1870. Ibsen had a poor opinion of Christianity as he had seen it in Norway, and he had a still poorer when he witnessed the Roman form of it at work in Italy; to him the whole thing appeared an art of hedging and dodging realities, an evasive, conventional form of social hypocrisy.

He was mainly interested in a new morality, but about the sixties there floated before his mind a sort of vision of humanitarian faith, which would offer to the world a synthesis of flesh and spirit such as mankind sorely needed. Get away from the mixture of religion and worldliness which is called Christianity! Get away from a pale, puny worship of the spirit, and from a false horror of the flesh and blood! Rise into the third religion! So did Ibsen construe his message. His medium was the play, which was even then beginning to rival the novel as a channel for propaganda. For nine long years he worked at a drama along these lines, not steadily but intermittently. The notion of it apparently came to him on a visit to Rome in 1864, and he finished the sketch nine years later in Germany. It was the drama of "Keiser og Galilær," "Emperor and Galilean." "I am an optimist," he once said, "inasmuch as I believe fully and confidently in the power of the ideal to propagate and develop itself. Especially and definitely do I believe that the ideals of our time, as they pass away, are tending toward what in my drama of

'Emperor and Galilean' I have designated as 'the third empire.'"

Ibsen's faith in this forecast of the future has not been shared by very many. His drama was an ambitious work, but it is not ranked by critics as one of his successes. It is a study of the Emperor Julian, and neither as an estimate of that remarkable figure nor as a literary achievement does it compare with Merejkowski's historical novel on the same subject, "The Death of the Gods," which is one of the triumphs in this class of fiction produced by the day before yesterday. Ibsen's massive drama drags. The propaganda which he inserts into its scenes clogs the movement of the action, and prevents the reader from feeling genuinely interested in the hero. The historical Julian we know, in outline, and, since Ibsen wrote, historical research has enabled us unfortunately to know him better, this crude, devout, impractical idealist of the fourth century, who, on coming to the throne of the Roman Empire, attempted not only to dethrone Christianity as the religion of the State but to provide a substitute for it. Julian was a nephew of the first Christian emperor, and after an unfortunate experience

of Christianity in the conduct, or rather the misconduct, of his relatives he set himself to reverse his uncle's policy by displacing Christianity in favor of paganism. Paganism for Julian amounted to an eclectic Greek blend of magic and mysticism. As one might expect, his artificial religion collapsed almost at once. But Ibsen made him the mouthpiece for a critique of Christianity which is significant. "If my soul gathered itself up in a gnawing and consuming hatred for the murderer of my line," says his Julian, "what said the commandment? 'Love thine enemy.' If my mind, athirst for beauty, longed for scenes and rites from the bygone world of Greece, Christianity swooped down on one with its 'Seek the one thing needful.' . . . Have you looked at these Christians closely? Hollow-eyed, pale-cheeked, flat-breasted, all; they brood their lives away, unspurred by ambition; the sun shines for them, but they do not see it; the earth offers them its fullness, but they desire it not; all their desire is to renounce and suffer, that they may come to die." Ibsen thus sides with Nietzsche in his estimate of the Christian religion, but he takes a line of his own, after the preliminary negative

analysis. He believes that the first empire of matter, which was equivalent to paganism, had been succeeded by the second empire, the Christian sway of the spirit, and that the third or final empire would be one in which spirit leavened matter, and matter spirit. "Then the goal is reached; the creature becomes one with the creator, the creator one with the creature."

It is a curt and superficial reading of history. Paganism was by no means an empire of the flesh or of matter. Neither was Christianity a rule of the spirit over the flesh, which amounted to a tyranny, crushing and thwarting the life of the senses. When one realizes the misrepresentations of Christianity by monasticism and puritanism in their debased forms, it is no wonder that Ibsen misunderstood Christianity; nevertheless it was a misunderstanding, a misunderstanding which is all the more astonishing that it is put forward with such confidence. The fact is, his work was partly influenced by Hegel's philosophy. The great German thinker fascinated the dramatist as he did many others by the apparent success of his views on progress. "I believe in Progress," was the credo

of the age; it explains alike the best and the worst of what was achieved in the day before yesterday. Hegel's glowing hope was that mankind were on the eve of a climax, and that the spirit of man, by means of thought, would erelong attain a vision of Reality in politics as well as in philosophical speculation. There was an intoxicating optimism in Hegel's attitude toward the world, as he read it in history and scientific achievement. Surely nothing would prove too hard for the mind of man now! "The nature of the Universe," he proclaimed, "hidden and barred from man at first, has no power to withstand the assaults of science; it must reveal and lay bare the depths of its riches before man, ready for his enjoyment." The stimulus of such a view prompted a writer like Ibsen to believe that a new form of religion was imminent. Whilst Hegel reinterpreted Christianity in terms of his own philosophy, however, the Scandinavian dramatist struck out more boldly for what he called the third great religion of the world—that is, for a final synthesis of civilization upon a religious basis. Hegel had taught him that the Absolute must be both matter and spirit, and he proceeded to work out this

great conception in terms of his own devising. Even the political rise of Germany under a man like Bismarck may have appeared to herald a final synthesis of governing power. However that may have been, Ibsen was for a time hopeful that civilization was entering upon a new epoch, for which a new construction of religion was essential.

Yet, even before he finished the play, he had his doubts. Could any substitute for Christianity be found? He fell back on a fatalistic idea that Christianity was destined to play its part in some slow movement of life on earth. Unlike Nietzsche, who toyed with the notion of a world-cycle, in the "Eternal Return," Ibsen had a solution which was more vital and purposive. He never could dismiss Christianity so cavalierly as the German did. There is significance in the soliloquy of his Julian. "Where is He now? Has He been at work elsewhere since *that* happened at Golgotha? . . . Where is He now? What if *that*, at Golgotha, near Jerusalem, was but a wayside matter, a thing done as it were in passing? What if He goes on and on, suffers and dies and conquers again and again, from world to world?" It would be of course unfair to

deduce the mind of a dramatist from any such speeches put into the lips of a character in the play, but the confessions of the defeated pagan emperor were intended by Ibsen to convey a certain message, and they are touched with a wistfulness that marks some abating of the optimism with which he had started to compose the drama. A Christian would not put things exactly as Ibsen does. He would say that the crucifixion was not a passing event but the hinge of history, and he might proceed to argue that the living triumph of Christ was the sequel to his historic death and resurrection. But he would agree with Ibsen's Julian that Golgotha was not the last thing in the career of Christ—not by any means. Whether Ibsen intended this or not, the impression made by his drama is that there is no healing for the nations in any faith or demi-faith which cannot see in Jesus more than the life of a good man in Palestine long, long ago, whose death was just one other murder in the list of ancient crimes.

So much for Ibsen. But he was not quite alone in this feeling for a third religion. At the same time Walt Whitman in America was moving in a similar direction. Those who have

patience to pass by Whitman's bluster of provincialism and animalism are rewarded by the discovery of real insight occasionally in his queer verse. With the quality of his genius we are not here concerned. Our interest is to note as in Ibsen a scornful rejection of religious experience—of what he calls "the puny and pious life." That rampageous communist, Robert Owen, spoke scoffingly of "the various phases of insanity called religion"; but Whitman like Ibsen rejected it for what seemed to be its ineffectiveness and lack of vital expansiveness, though Ibsen was sobered by experience of the great world, as the jaunty Whitman never was, not even by the tension of the Civil War, not even by the death of his hero Lincoln, which moved him to write some of his most splendid verse. From one point of view Whitman witnesses to a tendency which we shall notice later, the tendency to substitute Nature for God; he aspires to reach

"Through Space and Time fused in a chant, and the flowing eternal identity,
To Nature encompassing these, encompassing God—
to the joyous electric All."

Now and then he actually uses religious language to voice the conviction that progress

and freedom and love are sure to triumph on earth. He cannot sing this so thrillingly as William Morris did; he did not identify himself with any program of constructive socialism, though what the English poet afterwards made into a sort of religion meets us in the loose-lined generalities of Whitman, in lines like these:

> "Give me, O God, to sing that thought. . . .
> Belief in plan of Thee inclosed in Time and Space,
> Health, peace, salvation universal,
> Is it a dream?
> Nay, but the lack of it the dream,
> And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,
> And all the world a dream!"

But as a rule it is of men and of nature that Whitman sings, of individuals living naturally, loving freely, rejoicing in the sun, and fearing no dreams or nightmares of the next world. Such for him is the divine plan. He puts into this faith a sturdy, self-reliant audacity; his hope is for men who will face the world unshackled by either the past or the future, for a vast, swarming mass of independent personalities who find in comradeship and natural joys the secret of existence. Unless I am mistaken, Whitman was really feeling for a third religion on lines parallel to those of Ibsen. With

naïve bravado he essays, as he himself asserts, to "drop in the earth the germs of a greater religion" than any in the past civilizations of the universe, and when we come to analyze the content of these germs it is very much what the Scandinavian dramatist was urging, the unity of body and spirit in life.

"I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than oneself is."

We catch in this not only the silly pseudo-individualism which thinks of itself more highly than it ought to think, but also the same protest against a bloodless spiritualism which throbs in Nietzsche and Ibsen. It led some, especially in France, into a decadent type of thought; traces of this amoral tendency occur in the lower literature of the period, and I am not concerned to deny that Walt Whitman was infected by a certain obsession with the physical, which might prove a menace to morals. Still, the positive common contribution of Ibsen and Whitman was a reiteration of the truth that religion ought never to be made a matter of prohibitions and restraints, or an attitude of merely nervous suspicion toward the natural order; it is

somehow a synthesis of spirit and matter, or it is nothing. So judged these two contemporary men of genius independently.

Such programs of a third religion could not have been suggested, had Christianity been giving adequate expression to itself; for at the heart of the Christian faith lies the Incarnation, which unites spirit and flesh, and forbids any divorce of the two. Yet in these days there was, alike in creed and practice, a disparagement of nature which made men on the outside take a wrong view of Christianity altogether; identifying it with a bleak puritanism or with a morbid asceticism, they rightly turned from such an imperfect representation to some more human or divine conception of the bright, breathing world. We need a new Renaissance, they chanted. Pity that the chant had to be! Truly interpreted, the Incarnation does claim the body and the natural order for God; it does consecrate the loveliness of earth and the free play of both mind and the senses in an order where "every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." It ought not to be left to naturalism or to materialism to exalt the

fullness of life or the beauty of the world. But in the day before yesterday it did seem as though in some circles Christianity was shrinking morbidly from actual life. Contemporary literature is full of charges against it on this score. Instead of referring to the philosophical attacks on so distorted an idea or to a writer like Nietzsche, let us listen to three witnesses of other caliber. There is, for example, George Meredith. He wrote to Lord Morley that "our great error has been (the error of all religion, I fancy) to raise a spiritual system of antagonism to Nature." On this theme his central verse and prose are based, as we shall see. Then there is Ruskin, who in 1873 told a correspondent: "My own constant cry to all Bible-readers is a very simple one: Don't think Nature (human or other) is corrupt; don't think that you yourself are elect out of it; and don't think to serve God by praying instead of obeying." The virtue of self-denial and the instinct of unworldliness, which are vital to Christianity, were in danger of being expressed in such a way as to ignore or to depreciate the works of Nature, and Meredith and Ruskin were so far right in their

analysis of current religious thinking. Literary men sometimes misunderstood the Church, you say? Yes, but did not the Church often misunderstand itself? Was it not frequently insensible to the full implications of its own faith, as regards the issues of the Incarnation? Was it not committed apparently to obsolete views not only of Scripture but of Creation? Of that I shall have to speak in a subsequent lecture. Meantime, as regards this ascetic extravagance of distrust in Nature, let us add the third of our witnesses, the Roman Catholic liberal, Baron von Hügel. He once had to urge a pious lady to amend her ways. She had written to him that she felt it really irksome to turn from the pages of Tertullian and Augustine to Homer and Pindar; she professed to feel that her classical studies were at variance with her religious interests. To which the Baron replied in a letter—and I quote from it, not because it is literature so much as because it is more intelligible than some of his prose contentions—"If there is one danger for religion, if there is any one plausible, all-but-irresistible trend which, throughout its long rich history, has sapped its force and prepared the most destructive counter-

excesses, it is just *that*—that allowing the fascinations of Grace to deaden or to ignore the beauties and duties of Nature." So not all Christians were oblivious of the danger. But unluckily it was hard to convince the orthodox of their heresy. It always is, it always has been so. "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Such commandments or traditions may have been originally intended to safeguard the divine doctrines, indeed. But, when they become merely traditional, as asceticism or puritanism did, they are a menace to the faith which it is not easy to remove.

Were we discussing the history or the philosophy of religion, this would be a suitable place to investigate the profound issues raised by such arguments. I must content myself simply in conclusion by pointing out that it was the falling apart of Christianity from a sound, frank contact with Nature, which repelled many thoughtful people in that age. The orthodox creed, as it was taught and preached, did not seem to do any sort of justice to three radical features or factors which the human mind was coming to appreciate highly. In the first place, it often misunderstood or shut

its eyes to the newer conceptions of creation and causation; in the second place, it was too frequently indifferent to the religious significance which is implicit in the order and beauty of the world; in the third place, it exaggerated the element of asceticism or what was the equivalent of asceticism in the non-Roman churches, until some of the simple, clean joys of life were tabooed. That is, the scientist, the artist, and the moralist, all found cause to challenge an interpretation or rather a misinterpretation of religion which seemed to them both inadequate and misleading. They would not yield to *la nostalgie de la boue*, to pagan homesickness for the mud, even for scented mud. Neither could they cramp themselves with the official creed of Christendom. Hence such attempts as I have mentioned to construct or to forecast a third religion, attempts which to us look pathetic enough, attempts which died almost as soon as they were born, and yet attempts which would never have been made at all, had it not been for some failure in the mission and the message of contemporary Christianity.

CHAPTER 2
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In the last lecture I spoke of literature as reflecting the unsatisfactory relations between ordinary Christianity in the last century and the appreciation of what we call Nature. This dilemma had been brought to a critical point by the advances of natural science in astronomy, geology, and especially biology. Ibsen himself was deeply affected by the new disclosures of heredity, for example. "Ghosts" is a proof of this. But he did not imbibe the scientific spirit thoroughly; it is to other quarters that we must look, in our rapid survey, for the full impact of the scientific movement in the literature of the day before yesterday. The most familiar illustrations of this impact on the religious side of contemporary verse and prose are furnished, of course, by poets like Tennyson and Browning, and by a novelist like George Eliot. George Eliot's spirit is that of the scientific school, high-minded, unselfish, and undogmatic, whilst Browning vigorously championed Christian theism against the inroads of a mechanical

theory of the universe. Both Browning and Tennyson stand for the idealistic interpretation of the world, as that was considered possible amid the scientific categories of the last century. And, by the way, Tennyson was a much more original thinker than it is fashionable in some quarters to allow. It is still assumed by some that he did no more than put into melodious verse a few reflections upon ultimate issues which had been suggested by Darwinism. Nothing is more erroneous. "In Memoriam" was written ten years before the "Origin of Species" was published. As a matter of fact, so was Newman's book on the "Development of Christian Doctrine," fourteen years earlier. Ideas of evolution were in the air before 1859, and Tennyson in particular seized on them, thought them out, and acutely presented his views in verse that ranks with his very best, holding substantially that, whatever was lost, one need not lose faith in God.

At the same time, the scientific impetus that marks the day before yesterday was supplied preëminently by Charles Darwin. It is only a coincidence that Darwin was born on the same day as Abraham Lincoln, but it is

more than a mere coincidence that Darwin and Bismarck were contemporaries. Darwin was six years older than the Prussian statesman, but their careers, so utterly diverse, ran side by side, for, as the English scientist was beginning to stir the mind of men by his hypotheses about natural selection, Bismarck in 1862 became the first power in Prussia behind the throne. The one represented the sway of a dominant idea which was destined to affect the thinking of men ever afterwards; the other lived and worked for the armed State in political life, and familiarized Europe with the conception of arms and men in disciplined union for the supreme ends of patriotism. Such were two of the creative forces in the day before yesterday, forces without which the life of to-day is unintelligible. With Bismarck's powerful influence upon Europe we are not here concerned. But we ought to recollect that Darwin's works moved into action between 1860 and 1880, just when Bismarck was in the first strides of his success. "It is no mere literary whim," Lord Morley remarked, "to count Darwin and the prestige of Prince Bismarck

as twin factors in the change of public temper from the nineteenth century to the twentieth."

The more one reads not only the scientific but the general literature of the period under survey, the more one is impressed by the fact that Darwin's teaching modified the attitude of men profoundly. If one feature rather than another was characteristic of the age, it was the saturation of the general mind by the thought of what is called loosely "evolution." Before very long we discover men and women not so much arguing against or for the doctrine as, almost unconsciously, employing it in their views of the world, past and present. It is in the mental atmosphere wherever you turn, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, crudely applied sometimes and as crudely challenged, but always there. The idea of a sequence or a process entered into the spheres of economics, art, and history as well as of science. Instinctively, as we can understand, men also thought of their religion as well as of their civil institutions or physical environment as the consequence of some earlier stage or stages. In the interpretation of Christian history one result was a fascinating change of interest, which produced bewildering

and even revolutionary consequences. Up till now, men had usually asked about an institution or a belief, When did it arise? When, and where, and how? But the question now was, Why? Why then and not earlier or later? The perception of a long, slow sequence, in which one thing was connected with another by a process of development, a perception sharpened in 1865 by the publication of Tylor's "Early History of Mankind" and Lubbock's "Prehistoric Times," passed into the study of Christianity. And no one could foresee what this would end in. To many it appeared as though no room was left for gaps and breaks. The immense generalization of evolution marked an epoch, and it is little wonder that it dazzled or dismayed Christians, who felt that this amazing theory of origins and genetic development explained away the Creator, reduced the Bible as well as the Church to the level of a natural phenomenon, evaporated anything like revelation, and left no place for either freewill or even mental independence. Evolution, some of its hasty patrons shouted, accounts for everything in heaven and earth. When headstrong critics like Tyndall or Buckle were abroad in the land,

some Christians felt themselves inside a Jericho which would collapse before these confident cries; they believed and trembled. Others disbelieved, and, according to their mood, either cursed or sat down in helpless patience. A thoughtful minority did realize that the evolutionary hypothesis need not prove fatal either to faith in God or to that faith in human nature which in to-day's vocabulary of cant some call "democracy." Nevertheless it is true that when Darwin died in 1882 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, his general thoughts were living in the fabric of his age. None could anticipate the resetting of faith within the new mental order which he had done so much to create, nor could any foretell the reaction against some of his ideas within the realm of science itself; but, apart from the special scientific theme of natural selection, it was obvious that the broader principle of evolution which he did so much to popularize had come to stay and thrive, however it might be ultimately qualified or applied.

Darwin himself was not interested in metaphysics, but once origins are discussed the question of the end is raised. Personally he was agnostic in religion. He was reticent on

such matters, but, three years before he died, he told an anxious German correspondent that "science and religion have nothing to do with one another, except in so far as the habit of scientific investigation makes a man cautious about accepting any proofs. As far as I am concerned," he continued, however, "I do not believe that any revelation has ever been made with regard to a future life." Probably this represents his considered judgment. Negative implications about more than immortality were certainly drawn from his writings, till we are not surprised to find that in the wake of this movement some argued that the entire idea of a personal God, such as religion commonly required, was out of date and that the Universe must be understood, so far as it could be understood, otherwise. A view like this emerges in Thomas Hardy's "Dynasts." Here we have a literary phenomenon, and more. It was not published till the beginning of the twentieth century, so that, strictly speaking, we might regard it as outside our limits. I admit this. I admit also that in his latest verse Hardy fell back on a slightly more religious attitude. Still, the "Dynasts" is characteristic of the real Hardy who had

been writing his novels during the day before yesterday, from 1870 onwards; it does no more than put in final form some cosmic ideas which are at the basis of his earlier prose and verse.

The "Dynasts" is a great dramatic epic on the last campaigns of Napoleon, especially against Russia and England, which has strange affinities and contrasts with Hugo's "*La Légende des Siècles*." The poem is crowded with statesmen, soldiers, and common folk, but Hardy had no place for his French contemporary's "Dieu" and "Satan" on the stage; over all the action broods a chorus of the Fates, the Ironies, or the Pities. Admire as we may and must the superb workmanship of the epic, it leaves the impression of human life, thus overlooked, as a poor, pitiful thing—an impression which Hardy's verse and prose are apt to leave upon the mind. His heroines, for example, are as a rule either temptresses or victims. The entire world is to him tainted and muddy, a place where good impulses rarely come to much, and where chance and fate maliciously upset most hopes of happiness. Philosophically he is inconsistent, for now it is a deterministic view which is uppermost, now

sheer accident. He is most effective in protesting against anything like a mechanical view of the world, in the interests of a human morality, for he has tender sympathies and a poignant interest in human aspirations; but the thought of human life as helpless and handicapped comes up repeatedly. He is, like his contemporary, George Meredith, a stern prophet against shallow confidence and sentimentalism; he loves to remind us that life is often a grim, ugly, cruel business. Not that he fails to recognize clean and bright things in the world. Only the superficial would call him a pessimist. The adjective "pessimistic" fits him as badly as his Italian contemporary, Leopardi. But, as one of his acute critics has pointed out, the truth is that, "as so often happens with persons who are poets but not great poets, the sight of the good does not arouse the emotion which supplies the creative impulse." Practically this was what Hardy himself once admitted, in a later lyric.

"'*You held not to whatsoever was true,*'
Said my own voice talking to me;
'*Whatsoever was just you were slack to see;*
Kept not things lovely and pure in view,'
Said my own voice talking to me."

It is an honest confession. The underside preoccupies him, with its ugliness and fatuity. Joy is indeed in the world, but it is a gleam, soon overcast by the gray rack that drives across the sky. He will admit that an occasional spell falls upon him—

> "And for a moment I rejoice,
> And believe in transcendent things,
> That would make of this muddy earth
> A spot for the splendid birth
> Of everlasting lives,
> Whereto no night arrives."

That is the true faith. But alas, the moment passes, and with it the belief, till Hardy's eyes are again on the muddy earth; he feels that the transcendent gleam is neither lasting nor reliable. The fact is, for him the good was always second in his catalogue of values. And what determines a man is what he puts first. Unless there is supreme value attached to God and goodness, there cannot be religion in its essential meaning, and Hardy's philosophy of things prevented him from including any such values.

More than one writer had protested against the crude use of the term "God" by theologians and religious people. Matthew Arnold in particular objected to what he called "the

licence of affirmation about God and his proceedings, in which the religious world indulge," though he did not slip into the *gaucherie* of spelling "God" with a small "g," like Morley. Nor would Arnold, for all his prejudice against supernaturalism, give up the term. Like Renan, he had the sense to see that it could never be superseded except among the insane outside asylums. He argued that both the religious and the scientific world might well continue to use it "as the least inadequate name for that universal order which the intellect feels after as a law and the heart feels after as a benefit"—a vague defense, which did not conceal from alert contemporaries that Arnold had abandoned anything like the Christian idea of personality in God. True, from the literary point of view, it had the undoubted advantage of recognizing that there are some monosyllables without which we cannot do, and that one of them is "God." Yet his retention of the name did not mask the fact that the truth it contained was lost. And some refused even to retain the name. Among them was Thomas Hardy, when he composed the "Dynasts." It is not that he escapes from the cruelty and casual blundering

of Nature by taking refuge in God, as Tennyson sometimes did; Hardy rather takes refuge in Nature from God—*i. e.*, from all that he could call "God" in the world, from a blind, accidental power. In the phenomenal world he could not see anything like purpose or responsibility.

> "Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
> And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan"

into the lives of men and women whose hopes and emotions are really irrelevant to the nature of things. In Nature he did see some beauty; it is a relief to us to read, as it must have been to him to write, pages that bid us rest in the loveliness of stars and forests or ease the mind for a moment by contemplating the wide spaces of moorland and mountains. Hardy needed this more than most men; apart from such beauty, austere or gentle, there was for him a malign force abroad in the world. At best, he makes the poor girl in "Jude the Obscure" reflect that "the First Cause worked automatically like a Somnambulist and not reflectively like a Sage"; but when he explains his method in the prose preface to "The Dynasts" he goes further still. "The wide prevalence of the monistic theory of the

universe forbade, in this twentieth century, the importation of Divine personages from any antique Mythology as readymade sources or channels of Causation, even in verse. . . . And the abandonment of the masculine pronoun in allusions to the First or Fundamental Energy seemed a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same." This deliberate sentence echoes the implications of his earlier writing; it is no more than the underlining of a poem like "God's Funeral," where the world of men follows the Deity to his burial—a burial from which there is no resurrection.

Philosophers have dealt with the morbid fear of what is called "anthropomorphism"—*i. e.*, man making God in his own likeness. The high debate indeed is still in progress. At bottom anthropomorphism is the expression of a profound instinct in the religious mind. It is easily caricatured—any deep truth about God. But no caricatures or criticisms avail to discredit it in the judgment of thoughtful religious people. For it witnesses to this lasting conviction of Christianity: than personality at its best we know nothing higher, in this order

of things, and we cannot lift our eyes to anyone or anything, call it Absolute or Ideal or what you please—we cannot easily conceive any supreme order of being—in which the faculties of love and thought and will are not somehow active in a conscious unity. But the scientific mind often found this too difficult. It was repelled by crudities in popular religion, and Hardy, sharing the repulsion, identified "God" with a colossal form of finite personality such as our personalities are. Not even for æsthetic purposes would he employ the term.

(a) His effort to escape the supposed "anthropomorphic" associations of a personal God landed him naturally in some inconsistencies. Carlyle, who at one time loved to speak of "The Abysses" and "The Immensities," as though there were virtue in an abstract plural, recovered his balance; but Hardy in the "Dynasts" used cruder anthropomorphisms than any theists, when he talked about his world-force or ultimate reality. He had to personify, in spite of himself. He speaks sometimes of "Will," sometimes of "The Director of the Puppet-Show," and so forth. The effect of the poem is in this light to indicate that when people speak of a personal

God they may be actually less anthropomorphic as well as more poetic than when they concoct abstract plurals which require to be supported surreptitiously by anthropomorphic terminology before they can get to work. This destiny or "Will," for example, is not rightly named, for, as Hardy frankly allows, the world's course is no course at all—nothing but the aimless, unconscious dream or nightmare of an It, which uses its powers without thinking, stumbling along, and weaving circumstances in which men play the tragedy or the comedy of their small, miserable lives on earth. What is the use, he asks, of singing praise or of offering prayer to

> "The dreaming, dark, dumb Thing
> That turns the handle of this idle Show?"

As he cries reproachfully,

> "Of Its doings if It knew,
> What It does It would not do."

Well, but Hardy is one of its doings; logically we must regard Hardy's criticism of it as a product of the unconscious It. Which leaves us face to face with the paradox that the Ever-Unconscious blunders somehow into the creation of a human mind which is conscious not only of itself but of its blind Maker.

The loss of belief in a personal God is due to various causes. Literature shows, for example, how the artistic mind turns readily to what we call by the ugly name of "polytheism"; the artistic imagination dwells often upon the variety of nature until it may feel more sympathy with the swarming, flitting nymphs and deities of classical paganism than with a monotheism which, as interpreted by some creeds, looks dull and unæsthetic. Again, the scientific mind, subdued to the element in which it works, is prone to be skeptical of what a religious mind means by "personality" in God. There are indeed conceptions of the Deity which it is a religious gain to lose. But it is profitless to substitute "Humanity" or the "Immensities" or any such idol of the modern forum, as though these would purify and satisfy the religious sense. In the long run this means, for one thing, an inflation of the mind. It suggests to some that God becomes more perfect through our development, or that he exists through us and for us; and as a result of this, the individual is prone to imagine that he is indeed a fine fellow to be able to stand up to such Eternities, confronting the vast world, or even to declare

that it requires him not only to understand it but to develop it. In this there is of course a grain of truth, but the presentation of it as the whole truth is to invert the proportions of things, till one often overhears the same sort of moral braggadocio as annoys us in Henley's lines,

"I am the captain of my soul," etc.

Emily Brontë's "Old Stoic" is free from this, but then Emily Brontë did not share such a superior attitude toward the universe; her thrilling lines have no suggestion of a moral inflation which is neither sane nor impressive. In a word—and to come back to Hardy—there does not seem to be any evident gain for the intelligence any more than for the ethical interests of life in diverting oneself with plural paraphrases for "God."

(b) Also we are conscious of an instinctive repulsion to such a conception of the world as the "Dynasts" embodies. In its pages we encounter the ghastly notion of a soulless force or power behind things; it is a variation of the "groping protoplasm" which almost scared Herbert Spencer in his latter days. We are shown how men's "passions, virtues, visions, crimes, obey resistlessly" a Thing that

"heaves through space." One would rather have "the President of the Immortals" than this blind, casual Thing, which moves and upsets human destiny in a purposeless, convulsive twitching. There would be more dignity even in being the victims of a Setebos, in being played with and tortured by a Tyrant, than in being the spawn of this cold, inhuman Thing, whose only purpose is "a fixed, fore-sightless dream." You remember how Nathaniel Hawthorne felt about the three Fates, as drawn by Michelangelo. He resented the drawing because, for all its artistic value, it represented "the very idea that makes belief in fate such a cold torture to the human soul"—the idea, of course, being that human life is a a matter of supreme unconcern to fate. Man may indeed think too highly of himself, as the crown and climax of the world; even in religion this error has not been always avoided. But he cannot bear to think of himself as a little lower than matter, or as the sport of forces that ignore personality. "These ugly old women!" Hawthorne cries. "If they were angry, or had the least spite against humankind, it would render them more tolerable." So we feel as we lay down "The Dynasts."

It is the horrible impersonality of the Thing that outrages us. And the personal metaphors lugged in to set it forth artistically make it still more horrible. They are worse than illogical; they are degrading.

In other books the loss of God was hailed as a real advance, as though the ship had thrown overbroad a cumbrous piece of lumber. "God has been lost? No loss at all!" some shouted. "There is nothing divine except humanity, and we do our best to worship that." Some ardent scientists held in their haste that the entire idea of God had been finally discredited. Thus Prof. W. K. Clifford, Huxley's contemporary and friend, scoffed openly at anything like religious faith. "From the dim dawn of history," he wrote, "and from the innermost depth of every soul, the face of our father Man looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes, and says, 'Before Jehovah was, I am.'" In our own day this notion lingers on, though it has become less defiant; the ghost of it is visible in what is called pragmatic humanism, where man is made the center of consideration, as though man's chief end was to glorify man and to enjoy himself forever. In a survey of the

philosophy of religion this would be the point for discussing such a queer illusion; but as it has never inspired any great literature, it fortunately does not fall within our purview; we are not concerned to waste time on the orthodoxies or the heresies of the hour in philosophy. It is more relevant to observe that the religious instinct is not to be put off with any substitute for God in the shape of an Infinite Possibility or Energy. When an object of worship is demanded, men will not be persuaded to adore electrons or ether or the play of atoms. Consequently we are not surprised that some swerved into the creed of Positivism, which for a brief season had its vogue in England as well as in France. It was argued, never more confidently than by Frederic Harrison, that the living and growing organism of Humanity, though neither infinite nor sublime, would avail to rouse sympathy and satisfy aspiration. Substantially this was not far from the creed which the pugnacious German philosopher, E. K. Duehring, inclined to accept as a substitute for religion, and which Swinburne put so passionately in his "Songs Before Sunrise." Though he never belonged to the intellectuals

who swore by Comte, Swinburne was so disgusted by the attitude of the Roman church toward the Italy which, taught by Mazzini, he had come to love, that he saw no way for it but to make God in the likeness of man. "Glory to Man in the highest, for man is the master of things!" There is indeed an actual trinity in this deity of Swinburne: man's oversoul or liberty, man's soul, and man himself.

"A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit,
And live out thy life in the light."

At one time or another Swinburne had a passionate love for the sea, for Italian freedom, for Mary Queen of Scots, for Victor Hugo, and for little children; but after worshiping at these five shrines he had no faith left for any God at all. He had at once too much sense and too little philosophy to be enamoured of Positivism, but his tumultuous verses reflect a love of the spirit and the flesh of man which amounts to a religious rapture, and he becomes almost shrill and iconoclastic in advocating such a creed. He is not, in the

heyday of his poetry, so much an atheist as an anti-theist.

Smaller but not less genuine voices chanted the same conviction. Among them there were two Scotsmen. One was John Davidson, who loathed the rigid Calvinism in which he had been bred, and out of a hard lot demanded what he considered a human God, more human than the creeds seemed to teach or than experience revealed. How bitter is the sarcasm in these lines!

> "He is very God of God, not God of men:
> We feel His power, His inhumanity;
> Yet, being men, we fain would think Him good.
> Since in imagination we conceive
> A merciful, a gracious God of men,
> It may be that our prayers and innocent life
> Will shame Him into goodness at the end."

Davidson practically lost any faith in God. His contemporary, George Macdonald, with the same inheritance and the same impulse to reject it, wrote novels and verse which embody a constructive, simple interpretation of the Christian God; it is sentimental, no doubt, as sentimental as the theories of his contemporary in Russia, Dostoievsky, but nevertheless genuinely Christian, and not the reduction of Christianity to a cohesive power

of pity and kindness. Yet Macdonald was a contemporary of another Scotsman who followed the line taken by John Davidson. James Thomson, who wrote the somber stanzas of "The City of Dreadful Night," became a thoroughgoing atheist, and, still more defiantly than FitzGerald in his paraphrase of "Omar Khayyam," sought to make the best of the world without any God at all. His poem is the true epic of pessimism in the day before yesterday.

Time forbids us to notice more than these spurts of protest against the idea of God in the day before yesterday. The tide of materialism started by the apparent success of the scientific movement and swelled by the industrial triumphs of the later nineteenth century was indeed met by two counter-waves, by æsthetic interests, and by a revival of mysticism—the mysticism which went back sometime to Scandinavian or to Celtic sources for its inspiration, in order to recover hopes and powers of some better day. Nietzsche was countered by Wagner; Browning was not daunted by Swinburne. Nature was felt by many to have a cause and an aim. Nevertheless there was for the time being a distinct

loss of belief in the idea of a personal God, if we may trust the general literature of the age. Matthew Arnold declared frankly that he did not see "even a low degree of probability for the assertion that God is a person who thinks and loves," preferring to think of him as a stream of tendency or as the Eternal Power that makes for righteousness. George Meredith regarded the notion of a personal Deity as the very acme of superstition. And even William Watson hesitated; he was one of those writers who were vexed by the uncertainty about God rather than convinced that the idea of God had lost its place in life. Watson was agnostic, essentially.

"I wandered far in the wold,
And after the heat and the glare,
I came at eve to a Churchyard old!
The yew-trees seemed at prayer.

And around me was dust in dust,
And the fleeting light and repose—
And the infinite pathos of human trust
In a God whom no man knows."

Still, he felt that God was knowable, and a knowable God is not so hopeless as pluralism or pantheism makes the deity for men. Such writers—and there were scores of them—felt they had lost God, but believed wistfully

that he might be found. Which was always something.

There were of course European voices which sounded another note. There was Tolstoy, who regained some faith in God, and a man like Huysmans who struggled back from naturalism into a decadent form of neo-catholicism. There were singers like Christina Rossetti, Lowell, and Coventry Patmore, who remained undisturbed by the contemporary disquiet over theological issues. There was above all an eager, worn enthusiast in politics who testified to the same faith, as he endeavored to show Europe not only that there ought to be a Christian nation but that there could not be any nation in reality unless it was Christian. Mazzini was an idealist who, naturally, had no objection to force or fighting, if need be, in the interests of righteousness; but he shrank from militant atheism with all his soul, and in 1860 he was calling on the workingmen of Italy to renounce the false paths of materialism, which could only end in anarchy and self-interest, and choose the upper road of belief in God. Despite all that the Roman church was and did in their midst, he implored them not to judge Christianity by

this, but to believe that liberty and democracy rested on belief in the Christian God. "We are living," as he told his fellow-countrymen, "in a society as rotten as that of the Roman Empire, and in our souls we feel the need of reviving and transforming it, of associating all its members and its workers in one single faith, under one single law, and for one purpose —the free and progressive development of all the faculties which God has implanted in his creatures. We seek the reign of God upon earth as in heaven." Even more pungently did a wealthy, artistic critic like John Ruskin plead for a recognition of the true path to religious knowledge. Like Carlyle he was impatient of cant and conventionalism, but he had a positive alternative to offer. "It is clearly necessary," he wrote in *Frondes Agrestes*, "from the beginning to the end of time, that God's way of revealing Himself to his creatures should be a simple way, which all those creatures may understand. Whether taught or untaught, whether of mean capacity or enlarged, it is necessary that communion with their Creator should be possible to all; and the admission to such communion must be rested, not on their having a knowledge of

astronomy, but on their having a human soul. In order to render this communion possible, the Deity has stooped from His throne and has, not only in the person of His Son, taken upon Him the veil of human flesh, but, in the person of the Father, taken upon Him the veil of our human thoughts and permitted us, by His own spoken authority, to conceive Him simply and clearly as a loving Father and Friend. . . . This conception of God, which is the child's, is evidently the only one which can be universal, and therefore the only one which for us can be true. The moment that, in our pride of heart, we refuse to accept the condescension of the Almighty, and desire Him, instead of stooping to hold our hands, to rise up before us into His glory, we hoping that by standing on a grain of dust or two of human knowledge higher than our fellows, we may behold the Creator as He rises—God takes us at our word. He rises into His own invisible and inconceivable majesty; He goes forth upon the ways which are not our ways, and retires into the thoughts which are not our thoughts, and we are left alone. And presently we say in our vain hearts, 'There is no God.'"

So the great debate went forward, of which

we overhear such echoes in books of the day. The loss of God? The love of God? Which? In the Church, philosophy and criticism were rising to state the great argument afresh. But, though I have mentioned one or two writers who felt inspired to shout and sing on these themes openly in untheological literature, the intuitions of the great argument lived on, and it would be unfair to close without trying to catch some asides, if we may call them so, some incidental expressions which reveal the inward faith held privately by masters of literature who had no call to enter the debate. Take Thackeray, for example. He wrote no religious novels. His art stood aside from the current controversies of the hour. From his pages we would not gather that he was a contemporary of men like Mill and Darwin. Yet Thackeray, like Sully Prudhomme, had a mind of his own about religion. This we can see from a passage in his paper on George Sand, where he breaks out into a sudden protest against the crude, rude, familiarity with the name of God that prevailed in some circles of Continental literature as well as in the popular British religion. I venture to quote his words. because they

voice an underlying sense of reverence for the Unseen which was neither to be crushed by philosophy and science nor to be expressed (by Thackeray, at any rate) in terms of orthodoxy. Here are some sentences from his indignant protest against levity among the intellectuals. "O awful, awful Name of God! Light unbearable! Mystery unfathomable! Vastness immeasurable! Who are these who come forward to explain the mystery, and gaze unblinking into the depths of the light, and measure the immeasurable vastness to a hair? O name, that God's people of old did fear to utter! O Light, that God's prophet would have perished, had he seen! Who are these that are now so familiar with it?" Is it surprising that when Thackeray died, on the Christmas eve of 1863, his friend Charles Dickens found it not inappropriate to touch the chord of Christian hope in writing of the dead novelist? The last words Thackeray had corrected for the press were: "And my heart throbbed with an exquisite bliss." Dickens recalled this, and added: "God grant that on that Christmas eve when he laid his head back on his pillow and threw up his arms as he had been wont to do when very

weary, some consciousness of duty done and Christian hope throughout life humbly cherished, may have caused his own heart so to throb, when he passed away to his Redeemer's rest!"

CHAPTER 3
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HARDY'S great contemporary in English literature was George Meredith, whose novels and verse reflect another attitude toward life, an attitude in which there is also a departure from the idea of the living God, but a different and a nobler conception of Nature. The earlier romantic movement in poetry and the contemporary surge of science focused his mind on Nature. For Meredith Nature becomes God or an equivalent for what the Christian calls God. Samuel Butler in his own way was opposing a mechanistic conception of the world, but Meredith in a nobler way forbids us to think of blind forces or of anything mechanical in the universe; we are rather encouraged to conceive of Nature as a mother. There is a glowing vision of reality in his books, a reality which embraces man in a spiritual order of things. Whilst he is true to the scientific idea that reality is not mere physical reality but an order of which the mind of man is at once part and proof, he offers an interpretation of the world which

claims to do for man what religion had once tried to do—*i. e.*, to furnish him with a sense of the meaning of life and with an ethical code for managing life. Strauss had attempted such a synthesis on lines of his own in "The Old Faith and the New," but with depressing results; many just persons find that book lean and labored. Professor Fiske at Harvard was engaged in arguing for a scientific interpretation which would be free (to use his own words) "from the illegitimate formulas by the aid of which theology has sought to render Deity comprehensible." Meredith in England put such an interpretation into poetry as well as into prose of remarkable imaginative reach; his novels are literature and, like George Eliot's, they show fundamental brain-work, but it is in his poetry that we find a clue to the ideas of his prose upon ethics and religion.

Both Carlyle and Ruskin had protested vehemently against the mechanical view of the world, and both had found in Nature a divine spirit which was the hope and strength of human nature. Carlyle's affirmations shook his age as far back as 1830, when "Sartor Resartus" became a textbook for idealistic thinkers. Ruskin's stretches of religious prose

rest on the truth which he summed up in a sentence of "Modern Painters": "There is need, bitter need, to bring back into men's minds that to live is nothing, unless to live be to know Him by Whom we live." The influence of these two men was incalculable. In the universities young men swore then by two prophets, John and Thomas, and as this is a generation which has, to its sore loss, forgotten the prestige of Carlyle during the day before yesterday, I take the opportunity of recalling Huxley's tribute, in the moving letter which he sent, after the tragic death of his little son, to Kingsley. The scientist here confesses his faith. First, he remarks, " 'Sartor Resartus' led me to know that a deep sense of religion was compatible with the entire absence of theology. Secondly, science and her methods gave me a resting place independent of authority and tradition. Thirdly, love opened up to me a view of the sanctity of human nature, and impressed me with a deep sense of responsibility." Then he proceeds to make this statement—and remember, it was made in the year 1860: "Understand that all the younger men of science whom I know intimately are essentially of my way

of thinking. I know not a scoffer or an irreligious or an immoral man among them, but they all regard orthodoxy as you do Brahmanism."

It was in the wake of this spirit that Meredith lived. Casting aside supernatural religion, he found, as Huxley did, a sufficient inspiration in Nature. But it was an inspiration drawn from an interpretation of his own, which personified Nature as a mother, stern yet wise. I say, stern; for Meredith was no fanciful optimist. He knew his Carlyle too well for that. Coleridge, who never managed to work out the system of philosophy which flitted before his mind, once predicted with unusual verve that the result of it would be to show that "so far from the world being a goddess in petticoats, it is rather a devil in a strait-waistcoat." By "the world" he meant what we commonly call Nature. Now, when science tore off some of the sentimental veils in which the sharp, hard outlines of Nature had been usually hidden, an impression such as Coleridge had hinted at began to prevail throughout the literature of the day before yesterday, an impression of ruthlessness and cruelty. Meredith was one of those, how-

ever, who declined to believe that these sinister qualities were everything. In Nature he saw man coming to his own, as he obeyed the exacting, full conditions of existence. But what does this obedience mean? Well, according to Meredith, we have blood, brain, and spirit. That is, we owe to Nature primarily our "blood" or physical powers, never to be abused by asceticism or by sensualism. Then there is the brain; but, as Browning showed in "Paracelsus," intellect by itself is not enough, though without intelligence the life of the senses is a poor thing; we must recollect that we are also spirits, committed to the higher, unselfish ends of brotherly service. If one may venture to put into prose what Meredith generally put into verse, we may say that he believed the end and meaning of Nature was the good of the race and that Nature came to ripeness in the spirit of man as he thus entered into the object of life which evolutionary science revealed. What every man must attend to is the End of life, the Chief End, which is the good of the race, and this cannot ever be forwarded by any selfish absorption in sensual indulgence any more than by a repudiation of his natural or mental

powers. Against realism or naturalism—*i. e.*, a surrender to the flesh—and against supernaturalism, meaning a tyranny of the spirit, Meredith was at war, in defense of what he held to be the one sane, sound theory of existence.

The first of his greater novels was "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel," published in the same year as "The Origin of Species"; for the next thirty years and more he wrote novels and poems which, among other things, put forward this distinct and challenging view of life. To many his style is difficult, but he can write lucid, crisp sentences, in which the ethical message is explicit enough. As, for example:

> "In tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be, passions spin the plot;
> We are betrayed by what is false within."

"Who is the coward among us? He who sneers at the failings of humanity." "Who can really think, and not think hopefully?" "There is nothing the body suffers, that the soul may not profit by." "Surely an unteachable spirit is one of the most tragic things in life." "All life is a lesson that we live to enjoy but in the spirit." "Believe at the outset that

life is joy; only let joy be read spiritually; in other words, not as a thing to claim, but to share in." And so on. As for his view of Nature, sometimes indeed he will use the term "God," as when he speaks of Nature leading men up to God. But this is merely a poetic use of religious language; his theory of the world has no place for any divine power within the universe and over time and change, such as the theist or the Christian posits. "Nature" for Meredith is simply a synonym for God, and *vice versa*.

In studying the conceptions of this great novelist and poet, we soon become conscious that he was neither puzzled by Christianity as Goethe appears to have been, nor exasperated by it as Nietzsche and some others were; I think he passed it by on the whole as dynamically infirm, belonging to the ambulance corps rather than to the fighting line of life. He felt he got enough religion out of his view of Nature. And what he got was in the main good—the refusal to make religion an inclosed garden for mind or body, the conviction that faith is something to live by, and the heroic note of service rendered not with any close-lipped stoical determination but with open-

eyed trust in Nature or Earth over all. Alike from the scientific and from the religious point of view, exception may be taken to his theory of the world; into this I have no time here to enter, though it must be said at least that his philosophy demands an act of faith in the long run, which implicitly transcends the range of actual experience. Others did not so read the world they saw, but found Nature an antagonist to be met; so even Huxley argued. Others again saw in man no more than the product and plaything of alien forces. It would not be inaccurate to say that the fine ethical consciousness which by intuition Meredith deduces from Nature, his superb faith in the cosmic order as a sanction for the moral life, is not more justifiable than Hardy's less hopeful reading of the world, and again that it cannot logically rule out such an act of faith as the Christian's. There is force in Father Tyrrell's sentence that "the faith that Goodness somehow or other matters absolutely and eternally is a blind faith that must either stumble or open its eyes on God's face."

But I prefer to concentrate upon the real service and significance of Meredith's contribution, as an indication that Nature did

seem to some, the day before yesterday, to exclude the depressing conclusion of a man like Nietzsche that the ethical consciousness is no more than a by-product of civilization.

Meredith's naturalism is high and noble. He finds in his Nature the source of joy and service, a revelation so ample that it leaves indeed no room for anything like a divine purpose or power in the universe.

> "This love of Earth reveals
> A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,
> Irradiate, and thro' ruinous floods uplift."

The soul of the world, in short, as he saw it, was a natural order which was neither incalculable nor indifferent, but kin and kind to the good man, for all its sternness, and capable of exciting an emotion and even an enthusiasm which exalted Nature herself to theistic functions.

"Nature" here is of course something more than mere scenery. Meredith, who calls it "Nature" or "Earth," views it as the living world-process or order of the universe. But, inheriting the Darwinian tradition, he declines to dabble in any philosophy of naturalism. Like Goethe, he refused to read the higher in terms of the lower or the lowest, as though the

beginning of knowledge lay in the study of the amœba or of protoplasm; also, he denied that the life of Nature meant a surrender to appetite and impulse. The sentimental notion of the noble savage running wild in the woods, as the long-lost ideal of humanity, had been shattered by anthropology and history, and the pages of Meredith are directed often against realists who worshiped the trinity of Taste, Touch, and See, as if that was any approach to the "natural" man. In a word, he persistently interprets Nature in the light of the moral instincts; it becomes a sphere for the development of the higher self, not at the expense of but by means of our natural powers and functions. The Universe, as Meredith read it, justified human capacity and destiny. His reading, like that of George Eliot, was an ethical application of the Darwinian hypothesis, which offered a fighting philosophy to man, a philosophy reiterating in simpler and more incisive terms the ideas of the second part of Faust—viz., that the order of Nature is essentially one of coöperation and service, which demands from the individual resolute unselfishness if he is to develop happily and normally. There is a real glow in his philoso-

phy, a glow of energy and hope. Seeing in Nature not a mere sum of phenomena or facts but the inner law of these as the supreme law for human life, he loves to call Nature "Mother," summoning us to live within her household, in the atmosphere of vital, healthy powers that make for well-being, as we are prepared to accept them. "Close knowledge of our fellows," he remarks, "discernment of the laws of existence, these lead to great civilization."

On this view life and death are the pulses by means of which Nature carries on the race. Or, to drop metaphors although Meredith rarely drops them himself—human life is unintelligible apart from the organism of the universe.

The chief end of man is to do his part for the next generation, falling like leaves in autumn to form soil and mold for future growths.

"For all shall fall
As one has done,
The tree of me,
The tree of thee;
And unto all
The fate we wait
Reveals the wheels
Whereon we run;
We tower to flower,
We spread the shade,

We drop for crop,
At length are laid;
The end is one, we do but serve
For service over land and sea."

It is a version of Kant's "Kingdom of Ends," in which man is associated with the unselfish, cosmic interests of the universe, and in which he is sternly warned to seek no personal satisfaction as the first thing in life, warned to indulge in no hungry dreams of enjoyment at the expense of others, bidden at his peril, as Professor Royce used to say, never to seek sugarplums in the infinite. The pity of it was that Meredith thought this false craving was bound up with religion. He bade men face their destiny cheerfully and thoughtfully, but he dreaded anything like selfishness, and into the Christian hope of immortality, for example, he considered that unworthy selfishness did enter. "Sentimentalism," in his fine definition, "is enjoyment without obligation." Around him in society he saw it prevailing, and upon his analysis it made up three parts of the Christian hope for any future life. The expectation of personal immortality he denounced roundly like Croce at the present day, on the ground that it is no more than the thirsty craving of people who project their

selfish personal desires under the mask of a noble dream. He could not or would not see that this great religious hope might conceivably be finer than the hunger of the lower self for preservation or survival; his horror of individualism led him to disparage personality in its outlook upon the next world.

Against this it may surely be urged that personality has a nobler content than can be explained as the highest form of being available to Nature in her task of filling the nest and tilling the field of life. We may question if it is an adequate theory of death to say that, in the case of the unselfish as well as of the selfish, it is the perennial enrichment of the loam out of which the next generation is to rise and on which it is to thrive. Meredith's real difficulties about immortality were twofold. He felt—and who has not sometimes felt it?—the difficulty of believing in the continuity and unity of personality. "Which personality is it that endures? I have been this and this and this. I was one man in youth and another man in middle life. Which is it that is immortal?" Then, as I have hinted, he suspected a selfish motive in the

hope of immortality. When a friend quoted to him Edgar's lines in "King Lear,"

> "Men must endure
> Their going hence even as their coming hither;
> Ripeness is all,"

Meredith retorted, "For the individual that is true enough; but Nature makes of one man's ripeness the springboard to leap higher. Don't forget that." Yes, but to leap where? What does "higher" mean, in this connection? This recurring difficulty of the end is evaded ingeniously by Meredith, who declines to be exact and outspoken on the subject. Nevertheless it remains. A gradual increase of well-being on earth is one prospect. But what of the individual? He may not be cast as rubbish to the void, but is he simply used up for ends in which he has no vital part and place?

In aim and spirit, however, Meredith anticipated what was coming over his world. What he read into his Nature found powerful allies. When Mill and Spencer were the prophets of philosophy, naturalism had its vogue, a vogue which told hardly upon religion. But then came, during the last quarter of the century, the aid rendered to upholders of the

transcendental cause by the revival of idealism in philosophy, a movement which, though it has taken a variety of forms, has continued to tell in favor of an attitude toward the universe that is more patient of a religious interpretation. This has been more responsible than anything else for the bankruptcy of the older materialism or naturalism. So much is obvious, even to the outsider. Christianity may be still exposed to gusts of error like those blowing from Pastor Russell or from Mr. Bertrand Russell; a crude supernaturalism and as crude a naturalism have to be endured by this long-suffering generation in some quarters. But religion with its instinctive craving for reason and order in the universe is decidedly less embarrassed to-day by movements of real philosophy than it was half a century ago. The study of history is often indeed a cordial for drooping spirits, and even so brief a survey as we have had time to make may be sufficient to show that the religious people then were more right than either they or their opponents knew, in maintaining the spiritual instinct and intuition against materialism. As we look back on the day before yesterday, there is encouragement, as well as warning,

for those who believe that religion is more than an immature phase of human development, which is destined to be succeeded by the perfect flower of philosophy. Consider, in the light of men like Meredith, Carlyle, Emerson, and even a symbolist like Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, what were the issues at stake. They were essentially these. Is the highest to be interpreted in terms of the lowest? Do the new and astounding claims of science involve that the human soul or mind is no more than a pattern woven on the stuff of matter, no more than an illusion of the gray matter in the brain? Are the so-called laws of Nature destined to stifle any lingering belief in free will? Does our acquaintance with them rule out not simply the biblical miracles but the inward, individual miracle of a self-determining personality? Such were some of the fundamental issues which absorbed and disturbed the thoughtful over half a century ago. We have only to look round to-day in order to see how the situation has altered. When we lift our eyes to the hills at this moment, to the real authorities in philosophy and science, what do we behold? (1) A repudiation of the materialist scheme of things

—for the philosophy of materialism has been sorely discredited. (2) As one result or accompaniment of this, a tendency to abate the claims of determinism, at least on the part of some scientific metaphysicians; the objections to freedom of the will are not generally held to be so decisive as they were. (3) Then, the admission on many sides that reality is too large to be grasped by any of our physical or metaphysical categories. Gains there have indeed been, which only the determined praiser of the past will deny, gains too in the shape of deliverance from some misunderstandings on the part of Christians. Religion and health have come to better terms, for example; there is also a disposition to recognize beauty and joy more frankly as parts of the divine order; and there is an increasing demand for evidence and reality in religion. These points of light are not will-o'-the wisps; they are permanent indications of a better vision of religion, and we owe them to the struggles of the day before yesterday, when the finer spirits of the age debated whether Nature might not be the one divine object, whether religion ought to come to terms with the new knowledge of Nature or to abjure any harmony, and whether

there might not still be a sense in which the older creed could be repeated, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

Even in that day there were thinkers whose faces were turned in the right direction. Not all were obscurantists within the Church or around it. Huxley sharply declared that he was giving his life to this among other things, to "untiring opposition to that ecclesiastical spirit, that clericalism which in England, as everywhere else, is the deadly enemy of science." And the charge was not wholly undeserved. Clericalism was then a menace to religion as well as to science. All the leading writers are against the clergy; at least, the tradition or fashion of disparaging them is still in vogue. Thus to George Meredith the average Anglican parson, to Ibsen the village pastor, to Tolstoy the Russian priest, to Edgar Quinet the Jesuit, all are alike objectionable; in Meredith's stinging phrase, they are the "trusty rock-limpets of society," upholders of the *status quo* at any cost, organized reactionaries. One does not need to take this satire too seriously, although it had sufficient truth to be telling, even as voiced by the irrepressible

Samuel Butler and smaller fry of the period. Some smart persons are always disposed, as Lord Balfour has wittily said, "to represent Science as a land of Goshen, bright beneath the unclouded splendors of the midday sun, while Religion lies beyond, wrapped in the impenetrable darkness of the Egyptian plagues." If there are any such to-day, they are not among those who have a firsthand acquaintance with science or philosophy. And even fifty or sixty years ago there were deep voices calling out that light was not banished from the realm of faith. Not all bishops were like Bishop Wilberforce, not all priests and clergymen were reactionaries or typified by Pastor Manders. Besides, even outside the clergy, there were men who would not admit that religion and science must be finally and fatally at strife, over the interpretation of Nature, or that such instincts as reverence and loyalty might be consigned now to the history of religion.

Thus, in its own way, the idealism of Emerson and even the transcendental movement maintained healthily the spiritual view of Nature. Though Emerson's genius is indisputable, his definite philosophy is thin, when

we come to examine it; but like Transcendentalism, like the later mysticism of Maeterlinck, it did testify to something higher than materialism on the one hand and a meager religion on the other, just as Meredith did by his profounder philosophy of nature. Others, less speculative, made a religion for themselves out of the cult of beauty. Some sought and found a religion in humanitarian pity and sympathy; if they could not love God, they would at least love their neighbor; it is the current that flows from Shelley to William Morris, from George Eliot to Swinburne, from Victor Hugo to Mark Rutherford, taking all manner of channels as it passes down the century, inspiring this one to the championship of the oppressed in politics, this other to the cause of social betterment. Some of these ardent spirits derided Christianity. As Browning once said about young Shelley, they mistook Churchdom for Christianity. Yet their spirit was Christian, far more Christian than either they or their horrified clerical opponents would admit. It was an unconscious Christianity, which was not against what the Christian religion really stood for, and as we read their works we may well be patient with

their crudities and appreciative of their aims. Such votaries were doing something for their age which helped toward a larger solution of the problem than they themselves imagined. They might be at sea, some of them, and at sea in a fog, as not a few of the speculative mystics undoubtedly were; but at any rate they were not standing for some "false impossible shore." There is a wise remark by that eminently wise man Dr. Hort in a letter to his friend Westcott, which bears on this. Hort thought that in a recent article Westcott had not done justice to the Stoics, and he gave his reasons. Stoicism, he pointed out acutely, was in its practical philosophy an attempt to "provide a good working substitute for religion for the common man as well as for the philosopher." In that respect it corresponded to some tendencies in modern thought. Contemporary writers in fact were doing pretty much what the Stoics had tried to do in the second century A.D. "The spiritual need which supported, if it did not originate, their doctrine," says Hort, "is, I think, profoundly interesting, above all in the present day. It is the attempt to keep alive among men that which distinguishes

them from the brutes, by means partly of an unknown and unknowable and yet not unreal God, and partly by the order manifested in the world, itself the standard or center both of being and knowledge. Much—by no means all—of the apparent self-sufficiency arose not from pride but from the necessity of dwelling on man as the highest thing in the world—that is, in the circle of knowable things." This was written in 1861, and written by one of the few Churchmen who had a scientific training. What Hort evidently had in mind was the moral idealism or the popular agnosticism which appeared to leave nothing but Nature or human nature. In such times of transition, men do construct makeshifts in which to shelter. By "makeshifts" I mean such efforts as those just referred to, in which a vague cosmic emotion, or a generous devotion to human welfare, or an intuitive refusal to interpret life in terms of a struggle for existence, afforded a temporary refuge for the soul, amid its blank misgivings. To such we always owe recognition and dissent: recognition of their passing service, and at the same time a steady adherence to Christian convictions too large to be housed finally within their pretty

formulas. Such efforts and aspirations may be termed a religion, for their unselfishness and for their desire to keep alive the highest within man, though they are not Christianity as it has lived and moved. They often seem uncouth and strange to-day; but even in the day before yesterday some sharp observers felt their defects, recognizing that while they were honestly designed and even serviceable in the present distress yet they were unlikely to afford permanent habitation for the religious mind of man.

One illustration of this occurs to me. When Emerson visited Carlyle and talked over his New England Unitarianism or Neo-Christianity, Carlyle, who loved the man, perceived that there was something wanting in his scheme. Loosely as Carlyle sat to the dogmata of the Church, he knew enough about history to realize that his high-minded friend was looking for Christian faith in an unpromising direction. So, when Emerson had left, Carlyle wrote a letter to John Stuart Mill, giving his mind on the subject: "I should henceforth learn to see, or see better, that Unitarians are not hollow men"—"hollow" being a favorite term of depreciation in the Carlyle vocabulary

—"but at worst limited men, and otherwise of the fairest conditions. Their very need of a religion, strongly evinced in that creed of theirs, should recommend them. One seems to believe almost all that they believe; and when they stop short and call it a Religion, and you pass on and call it only a reminiscence of one, should you not part with the kiss of peace?" Wonderfully restrained language for Carlyle! But it breathes the spirit of keen, courteous criticism, which ought always to judge that such idealisms and schemes of Nature as we have been noticing were at any rate a recognition that if men abandoned churches they still looked up. This, I think, is their main significance for us to-day. It behooves us to appreciate the service they rendered to those for whom they were erected, even while, like Carlyle, we are disposed to pass beyond them when we want a real religion. To make a religion or a Neo-Christianity out of Nature or human nature is, at this time of day, to weave ropes of sand; if anyone desires to know why, let him read the preface and introduction to Martineau's "Study of Religion" (1888). At the same time, such constructions do testify to the truth that

no interpretation of Christianity is adequate which is not based on belief in the great moralities of life, that faith in God must be linked to faith in man, that religion has to do with God, the soul, and the world, and that truth, beauty, and goodness are ideals with which the animate universe is not out of keeping. The very shortcomings of a scheme like that of Meredith's, for example, ought not to blind our eyes to the shining implication of his argument for ourselves—namely, that the order of Nature must be conceived as organic somehow to the purpose of God. Who can deny that in the literature which we have been surveying, whatever be its limitations from the point of view of a religious creed, there were tendencies that made for an open mind, a clean character, an unselfish devotion to whatsoever things are just and pure and lovely, and, in the outlook on Nature this at any rate, a genuine perception of the Spirit

> "Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man—
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things"?

CHAPTER 4
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HITHERTO we have been considering certain aspects of the strain between faith and philosophy or science during the day before yesterday, noting how some lost their faith in God altogether, how others devised substitutes for Christianity, and how others again looked for light to fall from the clouds if not on themselves at least on the next generation. Let us now turn to recall how some intuitions of faith are portrayed in the literature of the day, intuitions which were felt to be fundamental, in spite of the inadequate or misleading expressions which they received in some quarters of credal Christianity.

We shall start from a provocative and representative figure of the period, Matthew Arnold. When he published his essay on "St. Paul and Protestantism" in 1870, he evoked thanks from Huxley for his prediction that science was destined to diminish the materialism of popular religion. Both Huxley and Arnold were intensely interested in religion, so interested that they aimed at its purification. "After

all," as Huxley wrote in 1889, "the reproach to the English people that 'they care for nothing but religion and politics,' is rather to their credit. In the long run these are the two things that ought to interest a man more than any others." Arnold did not write his books on religion for the sake of scholars, but with the practical desire to improve religion in England, and Huxley rejoiced when he read his friend's assurance that "Science will gradually serve to conquer the materialism of popular religion," the reason given being this, that "science more and more teaches us to find in the unapparent the real." In Arnold's mind this was an ineradicable instinct.

Like his great French contemporary, Sainte Beuve, Arnold had been a poet before he turned to prose, though Arnold's poetry is to Sainte Beuve's what wine is to water. Between 1869 and 1875 he was writing prose essays on religion, to educate if possible his generation in what he conceived to be essential Christianity. Books like "Culture and Anarchy," "St. Paul and Protestantism," "Literature and Dogma," and "God and the Bible" are not books which many intelligent readers of to-day can afford to pass by. Arnold's easy grace of

style, his austere simplicity of outlook, and what we may term his profoundly religious intuitions, are all at their best in these productions. As contributions to theology they are second-rate; indeed, Huxley told him frankly that he doubted if St. Paul would own him, "if he could return to expound his own epistles," and the version of Christianity presented in Arnold's prose is little more than a refined hedonism. No serious student would dream of supposing that Arnold had penetrated to the secret of Jesus or to the faith of the great apostle. These books of his are always so lucid, often so persuasive, and generally, if one happens to know the subject, so unsatisfying. Nevertheless in such prose studies he attempted a more positive view of religion than is to be overheard in his poetry. By 1860 he had practically written all his best verse, and now he set himself, among other tasks, to do in one sense what he praised Sainte Beuve for having done in another; he sought to carry "into letters, so often the mere domain of rhetoric and futile amusement, the ideas of scientific natural inquiry." So far as religion was concerned, this meant a popularization of the "profound, imperturbable naturalism"

which he admired in Goethe, and which he worked out along fashionable lines of the new Biblical criticism, inspired by a belief in human perfection and progress which the scientific movement seemed to justify Here, as when he touched literature or education, Arnold is not so much the doubter as the doctor; he means to bring out what he believed no avalanche of criticism or science should sweep from men's religion. He exasperated people by his airy condescension, but seeing or thinking that he saw the foundations of the orthodox creed being sapped by two currents, by the scientific spirit, particularly in geology and biology, and by the historical movement, led by the Tübingen school in Germany, he desired to show that real Christianity was not bound up with the popular theology which suffered under these attacks. His conviction was that the Bible and the religious spirit, if properly understood, survived any criticism, Biblical or scientific, and that religion especially, if understood as one essential function of culture, was indispensable to life in virtue of its preoccupation with conduct. He argued this persuasively, though, as the world now sees, in vain; his interpretation of Christianity was too

nearly a version of naturalism to satisfy the religious sense. But it is not without interest to notice in what directions an attempt like this reflected the instinctive faith of the day before yesterday. By "instinctive faith" I mean not beliefs that can be argued so much as intuitions which are dimly felt to be vital, even although there may be no adequate intellectual statement of them available at the moment.

Consider the wistful quietism of Arnold. Science seemed to reveal the stern limitations of life on earth.

> "This earth, whereon we dream,
> Is on all sides o'er-shadowed by the high
> Uno'erleaped mountains of Necessity,
> Sparing us narrower margins than we deem."

Yet within these limitations Arnold believed, with the cheerful stoicism which he admired in Spinoza, that the spiritual intuitions of the soul had room to breathe and move. It is inaccurate to speak of Arnold's "cold and resigned philosophy." The truer word would be, that he had a warmth in his conception of life which would not permit him to remain for long in a mood of resignation. The tide of faith is on the ebb, he once sings in grave,

regretful lines, recalling doubtless the contrast between his own uncertainties and the full creed of his father:

"The sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

This sounds depressing enough. Love and loyalty are all that he can grasp in the bewildering confusion of the hour. "Ah, love, let us be true to one another!" Of that human affection as a reality, Arnold never doubted, though in the last lines he appears to regard it as devoid of support in the cosmos. When I read these lines at the end, I wonder whether he was not thinking of the great prose passage at the close of Carlyle's essay on "Characteris-

tics," where the essayist bids us be of good courage in the present distress. "Let that vain struggle to read the mystery of the Infinite cease to harass us. It is a mystery which, through all the ages, we shall only read here a line of, there another line of. Do we not already know that the name of the Infinite is Good, is God? Here on earth we are as Soldiers, fighting in a foreign land; that understand not the plan of the campaign, and have no need to understand it; seeing well what is at our hand to be done. Let us do it like Soldiers, with submission, with courage, with a heroic joy." The poet, you may well say, is less exhilarating than the essayist. I grant that. But Arnold's complete mind is not in the lines of "Dover Beach," still less in the sentimental yearning over medieval monks, in the "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse":

> "Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,
> With nowhere yet to rest my head,
> Like these, on earth I wait forlorn."

Such verses reflect moods. But Arnold believed that he had found in the Bible, especially in the Psalms and the Gospels,

hints of the real religion which the churches misrepresented in their creeds, that real religion which would make a living world for the human spirit, and which he expected to form part of

> "One common wave of thought and joy
> Lifting mankind again."

When Dean Stanley died and was buried in Westminster Abbey, in 1881—Dean Stanley, who had written his father's biography—Matthew Arnold consoled himself by hoping that the sane Christianity for which both men had stood was sure to prevail:

> "Even as my father, thou—
> Even as that loved, that well-recorded friend—
> Hast thy commission done; ye both may now
> Wait for the leaven to work, the let to end."

Not that Arnold's version of Christianity was precisely that of his father or even of Dean Stanley. He had small confidence in his father's proposal to identify the Church and the Nation; his hope lay in liberal Christianity, working like a leaven amid the crude popular evangelicalism and the crude ritualism of the age. He did not see that his own version of the faith was as crude in another sense. But he did see—and this is my point—that some religion, some interpretation of Christianity,

men must have. Dilettante and superior as Arnold appeared to many in his day, he was entirely serious in his fundamental conviction about the necessity of religion. Whatever his moods, this was for him a settled principle. The theologians whom he despised had often a deeper sense of realities than he had, in spite of their intellectual limitations; neither had he the requisite knowledge to differentiate religion from philosophy or culture without severing their relations. But it is one sterling merit of Arnold's excursions into religious controversy that they were inspired by a hearty belief in religion. He was no amateur like Cicero, when he wrote on such themes. What he essayed to do was to establish an experimental basis for religion, because he valued it supremely, and whatever we may think of his attempted reconstruction we must recognize the value of his emphasis upon religion itself. When H. M. Hyndman, the Labor agitator, was an old man, he made this confession: "I used to think that social democracy would take the place of a religion, but now I see that human beings want something more." They wanted something more in the day before yesterday, and the Church

saw that; although it did not at first provide them with the Christianity they needed, the Church instinctively refused to consider either social progress or scientific philosophy as a substitute for the faith. Indeed, more profoundly than Arnold, the Church continued to assert that if truths like sin and prayer and inner fellowship with God are left out, the speculative discussions of religious philosophy are little better than a display of mental gymnastics. Nevertheless, so far as he went, Arnold was aiding the Church by arguing that men could not do without religion, and that no religion would do except the Christianity of Jesus Christ.

Analyzing his conception of religion, as one which may be fairly taken as representative of a section of the best thinking in the day before yesterday, we soon discover that he had two intuitions about faith. One was, that Jesus cannot be left out of Christianity; the other was, that the life of religion, as a moral experience, is or ought to be joyous.

(a) He rejected emphatically any idea of redemption. Jesus died in Palestine, and that was the end of him. The only message from the Holy Land is the saying of David:

"From David's lips this word did roll,
'Tis true and living yet;
No man can save his brother's soul,
Nor pay his brother's debt.

Alone, self-poised, henceforward man
Must labor, must resign
His all too human creeds, and scan
Simply the way divine."

For there was a way divine, as Arnold saw it. Browning saw more deeply into the "human creeds" when he came to write "Saul," "A Death in the Desert," and "Christmas Eve and Easter Day," believing that for all its mystery the universe did express the divine redeeming love. But Arnold's sublimated conception only allowed him to urge that men should leave out the resurrection of Christ and the redemptive love of God for men, and hold to what he called the Secret of Jesus. What he meant by this, we have not time here to discuss. Nor is it needful nowadays. He made the "way divine" simple at the cost of elemental religious truth, and, for all his high-minded stress on self-denial, he failed as utterly as Count Tolstoy to understand what Jesus was or what Jesus did and taught. His emphasis upon the ethical message of the Gospels was certainly in keeping with the

contemporary impression that little more than this could be rescued from the destructive forces of criticism; besides, it was timely to bring out this feature as against the theological preoccupations of the age; Arnold indeed here was doing what R. L. Stevenson set himself to do sketchily in his "Lay Morals" (written in 1879), what Sir John Seeley essayed in the classical chapters of "Ecce Homo," or what Tolstoy himself attempted in Russia. But apart from all this, which serves to explain his limitations and his aim, it is fair to say that he never for an instant expected that Christianity had any future without Christ. He was not guilty of the blunder which led some of his contemporaries, as it still leads some to-day, to offer a reconstruction of Christianity apart from the cross of Jesus and what led up to it.

At the end of the "Dynasts" Hardy makes Napoleon, after being beaten at Waterloo, reflect, as he views his shivered plans:

> "To shoulder Christ from out the topmost niche
> In human fame, as once I fondly felt,
> Was not for me."

In one sense, this is where the loss of God begins for Hardy. Leave out Christ, and is

there a thought of God which will stand the strain of life? The Church said, No. It sometimes said this one-sidedly and unintelligently, but surely its perception was accurate; it did have the intuition that more was required than a thought of some human Jesus who could be classified and possibly superseded, or than a recognition of the moral teaching of Jesus in some program of progress. There are writers to-day who reduce Jesus to such a small size that the reader, after studying their biographies of Jesus, wonders how Christianity ever got started. Not so Matthew Arnold. He viewed Jesus as an absolute marvel, beyond the grasp of modern philosophy, as he had been beyond the grasp of his first disciples who wrote the Gospels. It may be argued that Christianity could not have originated from such a figure as even he draws. But the point is that he insisted on Jesus as organic to the Christian faith. This was an intuition which, for all its limitations, was timely, fruitful, and significant.

(b) He also insisted on the joy of religion throughout the Bible. No reader of his pages will forget how he turns again and again to true happiness as the result of religious faith.

This again was a needful contribution to the evaluation of Christianity in the day before yesterday. There is a story told of Harriet Martineau once rebuking Carlyle on this matter; after the sage had been propounding his favorite view that the worship of sorrow was the highest idea of moral goodness, and that it was to be found in the New Testament, Harriet Martineau turned upon him with the retort, "I think Jesus Christ lived one of the most joyous lives." Arnold would have agreed. The note of joy in religion, the note of vitality and expansiveness, is struck by him clearly. It was not confined by any means to his prose. R. L. Stevenson shares it, so does Browning, so does Ruskin. In his Oxford lectures of 1884 on "The Pleasures of England" Ruskin boldly declared, "We continually hear of the trials, sometimes of the victories of faith, but scarcely ever of its pleasures," meaning by "pleasures" the accesses of creative power and harmony which are joy. In the case of Arnold, this conviction was partly due to the newer view of Nature which, as we have seen, infected a man like Meredith, but it was also stirred by Arnold's fresh appreciation of the historical Jesus. For Arnold

it was no shallow optimism; he regarded the joy of faith as the joy of inwardness, of moral purity, of a mind free from embarrassment, and of a glad consent to the will of God, such as the secret of Jesus enshrined. "Morality," as Sir Henry Jones used to say, "is an uncommonly happy way of living." He was speaking as an idealist in philosophy, who believed that the moral man had the great universe behind him in all efforts to do rightly and to think wisely; but he also spoke as a man for whom morality was a religious experience and achievement. So, the day before yesterday, did Arnold in his own fashion urge that self-denial had a vital glow in it, for the follower of Jesus: it delivered him from ennui and depression and worry. This was indeed an item of religious interpretation which we owe to Arnold preëminently; the faculty of joy to which he had noted Wordsworth appealing, was to be evoked also in religion. Cynics sometimes define work as the occupation that bores us and pays us. Religious people have occasionally understood their faith in similar terms, as a profitable, paying concern for this world and for the next, but not as any great source of vital interest or

joy. They may consider themselves free to depreciate Matthew Arnold's analysis of joy as defective; it certainly lacked belief in the Resurrection, which was the true source of "joy and peace in believing" for the early Church. But, such as it was, Arnold's instinct for the essential joyousness of religion is something for which one must be grateful. It showed that he had that sense of the center, which is so often forgotten in certain phases of religion.

There was another intuition to which I have already referred, but to which I must return for a moment, though Arnold here fails us. It is the intuition of immortality.

The apprehension that immortality was perhaps no more than a dream, and that after death there was nothing, entered deeply into the literature of the day before yesterday. Those who could no longer share the orthodox faith either avoided the subject, or chanted its wane in elegiac verse, like Clough, or sought to cheer men up. William Morris tells his first readers, for example, "Gather round the fire, and let me tell you stories, for the night is coming, and who knows if we shall waken in the morning? All I can do for you is to

amuse you and help to pass the waiting hours."

> "Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
> I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
> Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
> Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
> Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
> Or hope again for aught that I can say,
> The idle singer of an empty day."

This is typical of the writers who shrank from the prospect. Others endeavored nobly to make some equivalent for personal immortality out of their scientific categories, like George Eliot with her "Choir Invisible." This working religion, in certain shapes, asked the individual to rest content with the prospect of furnishing material for a higher type of humanity yet to be evolved on our imperfect planet. Meredith, as we have seen already, was a brilliant prophet of this constructive hope for the future as the only immortality. Yet, despite its ethical appeal, some good men shrank from it as others did from extinction. When in 1882 the Society for Psychical Research initiated an investigation into what might prove a real basis for some form of immortality, F. W. H. Myers threw himself into the work; but he voiced his well-known repudiation of

the collective view of immortality in memorable verse:

"O dreadful thought, if all our sires and we
Are but foundations of a race to be—
Stones which one thrusts in earth, and builds thereon
A white delight, a Parian Parthenon;
And thither, long thereafter, youth and maid
Seek with glad brows the alabaster shade,
And in procession's pomp together bent
Still interchange their sweet words innocent—
Not caring that these mighty columns rest
Each on the ruin of a human breast—
That to the shrine the victor's chariot rolls
Across the anguish of ten thousand souls!"

Myers echoes in these powerful lines the instinct which, for no selfish reason, made many thoughtful people refuse to accept the merely corporate view of immortality; what really stirs the instinct is the perception that character, personal character, must somehow be the one lasting product of life.

The skeptical and negative challenge, however, rendered a certain service to religion by bringing out one or two features which any religious faith in immortality is obliged to preserve, and which are yet often in danger of being relegated to the background of popular Christianity. One was, that the hope of immortality must be nobler than a more or less refined demand for egoistic compensation.

Another was, that the hope could only be held on a steady practice of ethical ideals here and now; as Clough, who wavered in the wind, wrote to a correspondent, "When you get to the end of this life, you won't find another ready-made, in which you can do without effort what you were meant to do with effort here." Arnold not only wrote of this in his sonnet on Immortality, but warned his pious contemporaries against two other errors that he saw prevalent around him. He could not allow that the mere desire for eternal life was in itself a proof that such a boon exists for us. Here the study of comparative religion partly supports him, for it does not appear to be true that the hope of immortality is a catholic instinct in the race. But Arnold's just argument is that the mere feeling of being wearied does not prove that "man has where to rest" in eternity. Again, as it is more important to remember, he resented the tendency of popular belief in immortality to depreciate the present life. Against this unwholesome side of religion he pleaded vehemently in the well-known lines:

"Is it so small a thing
To have enjoyed the sun,

To have lived light in the spring,
To have loved, to have thought, to have done,
To have advanced true friends and beat down baffling foes—

That we must feign a bliss
Of doubtful future date,
And, while we dream on this,
Lose all our present state,
And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?"

In other words, he held that the sanest way to convince ourselves of a further life is to make sure of a fuller life here and now, to realize our capacities, and not to shrink timidly from this order in which God has set us with bodies and souls and a constant response due from both to duty and happiness alike. That Arnold was ever sure himself of immortality, is very doubtful. But he was sure that such a belief had no right to base itself on any hasty and narrow repudiation of the present order, or upon any wilful evasion of our relationships to actual, practical existence. The service of this recall to a healthier idea of immortality was promptly recognized, even by those who had more substance in their faith than Arnold himself had. "One hardly knows which is worse represented" at Cambridge, Hort told Westcott in 1864, "Christianity or the love

of truth at all costs." On one side there was a rationalistic indifference or an arrogant materialistic claim that the notion of immortality had collapsed, and on the other an apprehensive or a defiant opposition to criticism and science. Yet the real protagonists of immortality were becoming better represented as the century advanced, more knowledge and judgment were shown in presenting this and other beliefs, and some passionate outbursts in literature accompanied the cooler labors of religious philosophers within the Church. I need not refer to the classical protests in Tennyson, Browning, and Longfellow, all of whom thought too nobly of the soul to surrender the pass of the immortal hope. Thus Browning's "La Saisiaz" (1878), written like "In Memoriam" after a dear friend's death, argues the case for doubting some current doubts about eternal life. These three poets indeed died with songs of hope on their lips, and round them were singers like Mrs. Browning, Christina Rossetti, Sydney Dobell, Coventry Patmore, and Francis Thompson. Instead of quoting these more familiar testimonies, however, let us again hear Myers:

"Thank God who in his heightening plan
Hath chosen to show thee the full fate of man—
Who not in peace alone hath bid thee go,
But through gross darkness and a wildering woe;
With all his storms hath vext thee and opprest
With wild despair thy lonely laboring breast;
Till there hath somewhat grown in thee so strong
That neither force nor fear nor woe nor wrong
Can check that inward onset, or can still
Thy heart's bold hope, thy soaring flame of will—
Since thou hast guessed that on thy side have striven
A host unknown and hierarchs of heaven;
With whom shalt thou, in lands unseen, afar,
Renew thy youth and go again to war;
Aye, when earth's folk are dust, earth's voices dumb,
From world to world shalt strive and overcome."

In this resonant verse Myers assumes that immortality must be more than a disembodied existence, that it is not what Stevenson derisively called "this fairy tale of an eternal tea-party," that death is but a stage in the progress of life, and that the hope of immortality is rooted in the present vigor of the soul. Eternal life is the sequence to a full unselfish personality which in this world has borne the divine discipline and so found itself. Indeed, the poet thinks of eternal life as the timeless relation of the soul in union with the pure will of God. It is not so much the fear of what happens after death as the fear of death in life, that matters—*i. e.*, the fear of living so

slackly and idly that the real powers of the soul die out.

One of the striking features in the literature of the day before yesterday is the persistent affirmation of belief in immortality, amid the very battle-cries of tendencies which appeared to contradict it. It was due largely, I imagine, to the influence of the Bible, still strong in England. When Newman published in 1870 his "Grammar of Assent," he declared hastily that English religion amounted to little more than "reading the Bible and living a correct life"; but he admitted that the former produced a distinct faith. "What Scripture especially illustrates from its first page to its last is God's providence," and that, he added, "is nearly the only doctrine held with a real assent by the mass of religious Englishmen." Now a belief in Providence carries with it some belief in immortality. When Tennyson, for example, put his faith into prose, it came to this: "There's a Something That watches over us, and our Individuality endures." The poet who wrote in later life "Vastness" and "The Ancient Sage" would not yield to naturalism his belief in immortality nor his faith in a divine providence; the two were organi-

cally united. And, apart from the definitely theological defenses which were not awanting, one finds, in wandering up and down the literature of the period, a repeated assent to "the sacred passion of the second life" among writers who voice an intuition of their own hearts. Nearly a century ago, when Carlyle introduced Richter to the English public one of the German's sentences which he found space to cite was this: "A man may, for twenty years, believe the Immortality of the soul; in the one-and-twentieth, in some great moment, he for the first time discovers with amazement the rich meaning of this belief, the warmth of this naphtha-well." It would almost appear that in the day before yesterday many had this great moment. Whether it came with the challenge of naturalistic science to their faith or not, they seem to have suddenly discovered the wealth of their intuition and spoken of it freely. Leconte de Lisle, the distinguished Parnassien of the day before yesterday, makes two of his characters talk thus. "Science will not suffice; sooner or later you will end by coming to your knees." "Before what?" "Before the Darkness." The last word in the Frenchman's fierce creed

of negation was "Darkness." In Britain there were undoubtedly a number of literary men who shared this nihilistic outlook on the future, content to anticipate annihilation after death; but there were an amazing number who, in that critical period, maintained quietly that faith in immortality was for them among the things that cannot be shaken. Let me cite a couple. One is, Mr. R. D. Blackmore, the author of that classical romance, "Lorna Doone." He too was in the company of those who would not forego the hope of immortality, as is evident from his lines:

"In the hour of death, after this life's whim,
When the heart beats low, and the eyes grow dim,
And pain has exhausted every limb—
The lover of the Lord shall trust in Him.

When the will has forgotten the lifelong aim,
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,
And a man is uncertain of his own name—
The power of the Lord shall fill this frame.

For even the purest delight may pall,
And power must fail, and the pride must fall,
And the love of the dearest friends grow small—
But the glory of the Lord is all in all.

Blackmore's novels delighted the day before yesterday. But there was a poet who did not live to fulfill his promise, the young

Scotsman, David Gray. He was becoming recognized as a genuine singer on the lower slopes of Parnassus when consumption carried him off in 1861 at the age of twenty-three. He thus stands at the dawn of the day before yesterday. And he too, in his Epitaph, bravely wrote out his faith in life eternal:

"Below lies one whose name was traced in sand—
He died not knowing what it was to live,
Died while the first sweet consciousness of manhood
And maiden thought electrified his soul:
Faint beatings in the calyx of the rose.
Bewildered reader, pass without a sigh
In a proud sorrow! There is life with God,
In other kingdoms of a sweeter air.
In Eden every flower is blown. Amen."

Thus, then, men and women spoke out their instinctive faith, in the day before yesterday, when old views seemed to be passing away, and when, as commonly happens, people were more sensible of what they were losing than of what they were likely to gain. Literature reveals a disparagement of the faith, but it suggests to us that a widespread number of writers, who were not altogether fools, shared the simple conviction that Jesus must not be left out of the Christian religion, that faith was at the heart of it a glad thing, of

which it could be truly said that, in Wordsworth's phrase, "the deep power of joy" formed a vital element, that if religion was a problem it was also a joy and power in experience, that God's providence was over the individual soul, and that when heart and flesh failed, there was some tie still between the living God and those who here and now had put their trust in him. It may be said that such expressions of belief are no more than indications of faith that still survived from the past, or that they are the outcome of a creed that was rapidly losing, though it had not quite yet lost, its inertia. Candles sometimes flicker up just when they are about to fade out, we are told; and in this, candles resemble creeds. The answer to this verdict cannot be given from the day before yesterday; it is supplied by to-day, for, as we look round, it happens to be precisely such intuitions that are in the way of being verified more amply and intelligently than ever.

CHAPTER 5
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In the literature of the day before yesterday there is one form of composition which assumed a curious prominence in the interpretation of religion. It is the fable or parable. At no time was it more than a minor phenomenon, but round about the year 1870, as it happens, in Spain and Russia, in France, America, and England, we discover traces of a reviving interest in this particular literary form, traces which denote artistic as well as moral aptitudes. Thus, in England, Lord Lytton wrote his "Fables in Song" in 1874, Mr. Froude tried his hand at the prose parable or fable in "Short Studies in Great Subjects," and almost everywhere novelists dabbled in it, like Hawthorne, Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, and Maarten Maartens, besides men like Taine in France. The allegory fell out of favor, and the dialogue or imaginary conversation was not a favorite path. The fable made more appeal. Let us therefore explore this byway of the period for a few steps.

It may be argued that "fables of the faith"

is a contradiction in terms. What has the Christian faith to do with fables except to reject them? Is there not the solemn assertion in the New Testament, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Is there not the apostolic admonition to "refuse profane and old wives' fables," and the prediction that "the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine, but turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned to fables?" Surely fables are of sinister repute in our religion. True, but these are not the fables to which I refer. It was right for the apostles to insist that the stories about the Lord Jesus were not so many fairy-tales or legends, invented to point a moral or to carry a truth; the gospel rested on solid facts of history, unlike the mystery-religions which competed with it for the souls of men in the dawn of Christianity. Nevertheless, in one sense, the faith has not been without fables. Call them fables or tales or parables, Christianity has been often enshrined in popular stories which brought out some point or phase of genuine faith. What is a "fable"? Etymologically it is just a

"story," something told—something told, it may be, for a purpose. Jesus himself used such tales, for his parables are stories told to illustrate the gospel; when we analyze them, we discover that they are popular anecdotes meant to catch the imagination and kindle the conscience. Orientals loved such stories. In the ancient world they were a feature of the people's literature which was quite common, from Greece to India, and Jewish rabbis in the age of Jesus were wont to employ them in order to apply their teaching to the masses. "Truth embodied in a tale" was a recognized form of religious as well as of moral instruction. And the inimitable parables of Jesus are only the first instance of this literary form in Christianity. Where the parables of Jesus differ from ancient or from Jewish parables, in form, is here: Jesus never made animals or inanimate things speak, and, secondly, he did not use the fable or parable as a means of exegesis—*i. e.*, to explain an Old Testament text, as the rabbis sometimes did quite effectively.

It is the former feature that marks off the parables of Jesus technically from most ancient fables. There is indeed in the Old Testament

one specimen of such a fable, the tale of how the trees set about electing a king. It is a political fable, of satirical quality, spoken by Jotham to the citizens of Shechem, and preserved in the Hebrew book of Judges. "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign thou over us.' But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?' And the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come thou, and reign over us?' But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?' Then said the trees to the vine, 'Come thou, and reign over us.' And the vine said to them, 'Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?' Then said all the trees to the bramble, 'Come thou, and reign over us.' And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'" There is obviously nothing religious about this fable or parable, any more than there is about the

famous Latin apologue of Menenius Agrippa about the body and the belly. It is a piece of shrewd, ironical common sense; that is all. Furthermore Jotham's apologue is a characteristic specimen of the primitive folk-tale, in which plants or animals act and speak as though they were human beings. At the same time this is not characteristic of the Old Testament. Thus it is noticeable that while the story of Jonah is a fable, the whale does not speak, neither does the gourd. And God does not speak to either; the action of the dialogue is between man and man or man and God.

The difference in this respect between the parables of Jesus and Oriental fables may be illustrated by a comparison between a tale preserved in the "Wisdom of Ahikar," an ancient collection of sayings and stories, and a parable of Jesus in the Gospels. The Ahikar apologue, which is preserved in the Armenian version, runs thus: "Son, thou hast been to me like a palm tree which was growing with roots on the bank of a river. When the fruit ripened, it fell into the river. The lord of the tree came to cut it down. But the tree said, 'Leave me in this place,

that next year I may bear fruit.' The lord of the tree said, 'Up to this day thou hast been useless to me; in the future thou wilt not become useful.'" Now, watch how Jesus uses this sort of story for a similar purpose of warning. "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, 'Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?' And he answering said unto him, 'Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.'" You observe that Jesus does not make the tree remonstrate; it is the gardener who speaks.

The parable or fable was never far away from the allegory, of course. What distinguishes them is this: expand a metaphor and you get an allegory, expand a simile and you get a parable. Strictly, this is the difference between the two literary forms. "The kingdom of heaven is like" this or that; there is the germ of a parable. You compare one thing with

another. But take a metaphor like that of "strangers and pilgrims" or of the "good fight of the faith," and from the hands of a genius like Bunyan you receive "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Holy War," both elaborate allegories in the shape of stories, just as "The Idylls of the King" is. What is common to both parable and allegory is the imaginative element.

There have been persons, however, who do not care for this sort of thing in religion. The religious world has seldom been without good people who have been too matter-of-fact to appreciate imagination in any shape or form. It is odd to find a critic like Mr. Froude objecting to fables and allegories, on the ground that they denote a decadence in religion. In his monograph on Bunyan he argues that "so long as a religion is alive, men do not talk about it or make allegories about it. They assume its truth as out of reach of question, and they simply obey its precepts as they obey the law of the land. It becomes a subject of art and discourse only when men are unconsciously ceasing to believe." But the fable or allegory is not a mere amusement in religion; no more than ritual is it necessarily

a species of decorative art in which men take refuge from reality. On the contrary it is an expression of their vital faith. They write such stories in order to make their faith more pointed, desiring to help it in action and application. Surely with a man like Bunyan, for example, it was precisely because he did believe in religion and because it did govern his life, because he desired it also to govern the lives of his fellows, that he wrote his immortal tales. They are imaginative? Yes, but imagination is not fancy; it is the intense vision of reality. As it happens, Bunyan's pieces are literature, but his aim was not to produce literature. The object of his story-telling was that of Jesus in the parables, religious and practical. Even from his quaint, versified apology we can see how some good people objected to him using imagination in expounding religion, and how he appealed to the parables of Jesus in defense of a practice which his critics thought was dangerous and unbecoming, smacking of levity and unreality. Why should he not use this method, he asks, when it was used for political satire, and when the parables of the Bible were a sufficient precedent?

> "Let Truth be free
> To make her sallies upon thee and me,
> Which way it pleases God!"

The allegory, then, the apologue, the parable, or—let us say boldly, the fable—may have its function as a form of appeal by truth to the human mind. "Where truth in closest words shall fail," where logic and argument make little or no impression, there, we may safely believe,

> "Truth embodied in a tale
> Shall enter in at lowly doors."

The Puritanism of seventeenth-century England which narrowly cavilled at Bunyan's use of imagination in religious literature was as mistaken in this as in its sweeping objection to symbolism; the one protest like the other meant a wilful impoverishment of faith's appeal to human nature. Symbolism in a vital form has to be developed by Christianity in any age, and the story or fable is as justified as the cross or the crucifix in an effort to embody and transmit the inward soul of reality to the worshiper. The fable is indeed a picture-story, a story that pictures some aspect of truth. And truth or thought flows instinctively into pictures. The question is

not, are we or are we not to have such symbols? but, are we to have them at their brightest and best, whether they take the form of words or of objects?

The principal reason why the religious story or parable did not usually call itself a "fable" was that this term had become associated with what was unbelievable or impossible. To "fable" meant commonly to tell untruths. When the French general had threatened the English from the walls of Bordeaux, Shakespeare's Talbot muttered,

"He fables not."

The Englishman is sure that the threat is not idle or feigned. But "fable" had also sunk, because the kind of morality inculcated in these stories was rarely very high. From the first, it might be amusing and instructive, even when it was fictitious, but seldom was it edifying. Generally the fable conveyed a cautious, clever prudence. This was in part due to its origin. Æsop of Samos used it in the sixth century B.C. for political purposes, as overt criticism of tyrants whom it was dangerous to satirize openly, and this vogue of the fable, which lasted down to Kryloff, the Russian who wrote just before Tolstoy,

helps to explain some of its conventional ethic. But, aside from this, it lent itself more to prudential ethics than to anything else. Hence its disrepute in the religious world. Like "myth" it had compromising associations with an indifference to historical veracity, but it also became famous or infamous for a moral teaching which was shrewd rather than saintly. Thus, in the seventeenth century, when La Fontaine skillfully and neatly wove his fables, they taught a worldly wisdom, gentle and not ungracious at times, yet devoid of very much that an earnest Christian conscience would desire. This became even more marked in the case of his English imitators, Gay and Prior. The result of it all was that, as the ethic of the "fable" had never been particularly lofty, it fell into further disrepute among the godly.

However, in the day before yesterday, "fable" began to be employed more freely as an equivalent for a short natural story, a pointed illustration, an apt tale, which brought out some inward aspect or element of ethics or even of religion. Most sensible people love such stories, if they are well done. In certain moods human beings prefer to have truth suggested to them rather than directly

thrust on their attention by an exhorter. Like children, they may be impatient of didactic arguments. Or they may be constitutionally shy of abstract truth, which they will receive and enjoy if only it be put into a homely tale. In the day before yesterday there were good people who had never heard of their French contemporary Verlaine, and who would have shuddered at his verse, but who nevertheless would have understood what he meant by protesting, "*Prends l'éloquence et tords-lui son cou.*" Declamation indeed still held its place in politics and in the pulpit, but the reading public resented its intrusion into serious argument. There was already a tendency to demand something more deft and artistic in the appeal to intelligence. Have a purpose, if you like, but do not thrust it on us! Take eloquence and wring the neck of it! Let us have truth in less obvious and hortatory shapes. Spare us assaults on the emotions, and have done with the uneducated rant which shouts "I tell you," "psychological," "tremendous," and "epoch-making" at every turn.

> "We yawn at sermons, but we gladly turn
> To moral tales, and so amused we learn."

It was with a dim perception of this that a number of people turned hopefully to the literary form of the fable or parable, for with all its limitations it protected them against the drift of deliberate rhetoric and also against the chatter of philosophical and theological jargon. The latter nuisance was beginning to be resented. It is true that the day before yesterday was spared phrases like "a multiple God," which afflict our day, but even then the delusion was spreading in some circles of the intellectuals that polysyllables are the dialect of profundity. Of polysyllables in the usage of religious philosophy one is tempted to say, as Pope said at the end of the "Dunciad," that light dies before these uncreating words. Many seem to have realized this about the year 1870. Hence their recourse, in search of real religious enlightenment and stimulus, to the simple fable or story. It was a form which, like that of the sonnet, had to be brief and pointed, if it was to be successful. I admit, the ethical level still was often below that of Christianity. Or, to put it more justly, we may say that the tone was ethical rather than Christian as a rule; the aim was to divert the mind, and grotesque elements were not

eschewed, if only the reader could be caught. A characteristic specimen is this, from the Dutch novelist Maarten Maartens: "There was a man once—a satirist. In the natural course of time his friends slew him, and he died. And the people came and stood about his corpse. 'He treated the whole round world as his football,' they said indignantly, 'and he kicked it.' The dead man opened one eye. 'But,' he said, 'always toward the goal.'" That illustrates one form of what I mean by the "fable." It embodies one moral reflection or precept. It is brief, crisp, and it never draws a moral. As Stevenson put it, in his review of Lord Lytton's book, nowadays our fables are not quite fabulous. "We find ourselves in the presence of quite a serious, if quite a miniature, division of creative literature; and sometimes we have the lesson embodied in a sober, everyday narration, as in the parables of the New Testament, and sometimes merely the statement or at most the collocation of significant facts in life, the reader being left to resolve for himself the vague, troublesome, and not yet definitely moral sentiment which has been thus created." In the literary fable there is no longer the

conclusion, "And the moral of that is . . ." The story-teller must not follow the improving method of the Duchess in "Alice in Wonderland"; he must leave the reader to catch the quick point of the tale as told. Thus Froude's "Parable of the Bread-Fruit Tree" tells its own message, needing no pendant. Stevenson himself wrote about nineteen fables of this kind, and unashamedly he did tack on a moral to some of them. But one of his best has none. Were space available, I should have liked to quote "Faith, Half-Faith, and No-Faith-at-All," since that fine specimen is more religious. However, this will suffice to show the method followed. One may allow that "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" might be ranked as the most impressive "fable" that he ever wrote, but here is "The Four Reformers," a satirical warning which is by no means out of date:

> "Four reformers met under a bramble bush. They were agreed the world must be changed. 'We must abolish property,' said one. 'We must abolish marriage,' said the second. 'We must abolish God,' said the third. 'I wish we could abolish work,' said the fourth.

"'Do not let us get beyond practical politics,' said the first. 'The first thing is to reduce men to a common level.' 'The first thing,' said the second, 'is to give equality to the sexes.' 'The first thing,' said the third, 'is to find out how to do it.' 'The first step,' said the first, 'is to abolish the Bible.' 'The first thing,' said the second, 'is to abolish the laws.' 'The first thing,' said the third, 'is to abolish mankind.'"

When thin and hasty radicals hold conferences on the pressing duty of remolding the social universe nearer to their hearts' desire, this is the sort of fable which thoughtful persons recall for their own comfort and amusement.

There were authors who also used this literary form in order to commend their faith. In one sense the pioneer here had been Lessing, for his play "Nathan the Wise" is a sort of large apologue which carries the message of his humane religious philosophy. Lessing a century earlier had handled all forms of the fable and story, in prose and verse; he not only wrote a critical study of this

form, discussing its educational value, but delighted his age with specimens of tales and parables, which now and then cross from mere ethics into the borderland of religion. And why not? If fables and stories can be employed in order to make people think about kindness and justice, or to put them on their guard against haste and folly, or to shame them into tolerance and consideration, why should not the same literary form be turned to the teaching of faith and hope and love? May we not learn these also as we are amused, or as our imagination is kindled? The truth is, that the faith does produce such "fables" just because it is no fable; it is capable of suggesting stories which embody picturesquely and memorably the shining realities of life between God and man, making use of humor and imagination to do so. The work is achieved by way of suggestion primarily. For there is no reason to believe that one comes closer to reality in religion by employing abstract terms; religious people know that the mysteries of the faith reach the mind through suggestion in language quite as well as by attempts at exhaustive definition. Intelligence has a way of ripening on the soil of

suggestion, and this applies to the religious no less than to the æsthetic consciousness. The faith may shimmer through a fable no less than through a formula, just because it is faith—*i. e.*, an affair of personal relations. Hence the justification of fables and tales and their popularity among more than children. In the day before yesterday there were, as I have said, writers who realized this. They might have appealed to the use of "myths" by Plato, in order to convey some of his profound ideas about life; but as a rule they worked upon their own initiative, feeling for truth beyond purely rational categories, and some of them produced work in this field which has proved of lasting value.

No one did better service here than Tolstoy. By 1870 he had written "War and Peace," and was ready for "Anna Karenina," his two masterpieces in fiction, the former especially being one of the greatest novels in the world. But at the same time he was turning his mind toward the task of writing tales for children and the peasantry. They are stories and popular fables, sometimes of amazing beauty and simplicity. Like Bunyan, he was utterly devoid of literary self-consciousness; he wrote

such pieces in order to impress the popular mind with what he believed to be the essentials of religion and morality. They were part of his naïve educational method. For this kind of literature indeed Tolstoy had a positive genius. Fairy tales, apologues, and parables poured from his pen. Some were short stories, like 'When you neglect the fire, you do not put it out,' or 'God sees the truth, but he does not tell at once.' Others are actually founded upon the Bible. Others again are merely beast and bird stories adapted from Indian and Greek sources, and a fourth class consists of Russian anecdotes. Nearly all were written between 1860 and 1880, when he was engaged in popular education, which he was seeking to reform on lines that would free Russians from the clerical mishandling of the schools. Collections of these charming tales are accessible in English to any modern reader. I content myself by quoting an extract which seems to me to be one of his impressive pieces, with the piercing qualities of vision and conviction, though strictly speaking it is larger than some in his popular collections and more loosely put together. It is the vivid apologue of a man suddenly awakening to the danger

and the meaning of life, as God means it to be lived.

"It was as if I had suddenly found myself sitting in a boat which had been pushed off from an unknown shore, as if I had been shown the direction of the opposite shore, and given a pair of oars, and left alone. I ply the oars, I row ahead; but the farther I go, the stronger the current becomes, carrying me out of my course. I meet other people afloat, also carried away by the current; some have thrown their oars away, a few are struggling against the stream, but most of them glide on with it. The further I go, the more I watch the long line of boats floating down the current, and I forget the course pointed out to me as my own. From every side cheery voices shout to me that there can be no other direction. I believe them; as men drift down the stream or glide with the current, I let myself drift along with them, until at last I hear the roar of the rapids. Already I can see boats there broken up, and I know I myself must perish. Then I come to myself. Before me I can see

nothing but destruction; I am hurrying fast toward it. What must I do? Looking back, I notice a number of boats now struggling to make headway against the current; and then I remember all about the opposite shore, the course, and the oars. I begin at once to row hard upstream to reach the opposite side. The shore is God; the current is tradition; the oars are freewill, given that I may gain union with God."

That, as you can readily perceive, is an allegorical fable, with autobiographical color. It has the merit of being free from anything hortatory; it does not smack of the schoolroom or the pulpit. Indeed, Tolstoy's finer fables, whatever we may think of their content, touch the heart of the people. Modern fables are apt to be literary, in the sense that their writers are too conscious of the methods they are using and of the art they are displaying. But on the whole Tolstoy's tales are free from the taint of ink and pen. They are direct and brief and true to life; they gather up some truth and compress it into a telling shape that goes straight to the heart of the unsophisticated. A handful of sentences embody what

would take pages of abstract argument in a treatise. This is the true end and ethos of the artless fable in the region of the faith; like the ballad in literature, it succeeds as it touches the general heart. On the other hand, if the writer is too elaborate or conscious of his own cleverness, the fable fails. Tolstoy hardly ever failed.

The last example I shall give is from a very different source. It is written by Oscar Wilde, who published it in 1894, at the very close of our period. Wilde was fond of the prose-poem as a literary form; in his hands it sometimes became quite effective as an appeal to the cultured, more effective in this quarter than Froude's experiments. Once or twice, one likes to think, he forgot to pose, and the present fable, composed before he slipped into the pit of corruption, is a prose-picture or tale of religion, where he manages to write what is both reverent and moving. Naturally his audience is not Tolstoy's; but his method is almost entirely devoid of preciosity. Suppose that you wanted to impress people with the fact that God's best gifts are sometimes abused by men, who turn them into occasions and opportunities

of gratifying the lusts of the flesh and the world. Suppose also that you desired to hint that this and other misdeeds make life a mournful spectacle, over which men as well as angels might well weep. How would you do it? How would you set about preaching this truth artistically, indirectly, and yet powerfully to your age? Well, this is how Oscar Wilde tried to do it. He wrote the following prose-picture in order to suggest that to do people good does not necessarily mean that you make them good. The tale is called, "The Doer of Good." It professes to be a fable or tale about Jesus on earth.

"It was night-time, and He was alone. And He saw afar-off the walls of a round city and went toward the city. And when He came near He heard within the city the tread of the feet of joy and the laughter of the mouth of gladness, and the loud noise of many lutes. And He knocked at the gate and certain of the gate-keepers opened to Him. And He beheld a house that was of marble and had fair pillars of marble before it. . . . And He entered the house. And when He had passed through the hall of chalcedony

and the hall of jasper, and reached the long hall of feasting, He saw lying on a couch of sea-purple one whose hair was crowned with red roses and whose lips were red with wine. And He went behind him and touched him on the shoulder and said to him, 'Why do you live like this?' And the young man turned round and recognized Him, and made answer and said, 'But I was a leper once, and you healed me. How else should I live?'

"And He passed out of the house and went again into the street. And after a little while He saw one whose face and raiment were painted and whose feet were shod with pearls. And behind her came, slowly as a hunter, a young man who wore a cloak of two colors. Now the face of the woman was as the fair face of an idol, and the eyes of the young man were bright with lust. And He followed swiftly and touched the hand of the young man and said to him, 'Why do you look at this woman and in such wise?' And the young man turned round and recognized Him and said, 'But I was blind once, and you gave me sight. At what else should I

look?' And He ran forward and touched the painted raiment of the woman and said to her, 'Is there no other way in which to walk save the way of sin?' And the woman turned round and recognized Him, and laughed and said, 'But you forgave me my sins, and the way is a pleasant way.'

"And He passed out of the city. And when He had passed out of the city He saw seated by the roadside a young man who was weeping. And He went toward him and touched the locks of his hair and said to him, 'Why are you weeping?' And the young man looked up and recognized Him and made answer, 'But I was dead once and you raised me from the dead. What else should I do but weep?'"

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